

## Healthy Physical Activity

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Let's get moving! Have you heard the expression: What is good for your heart is good for your brain? It's true!

If you are a person who has always enjoyed physical activity and are now caring for someone with dementia, do your best to continue your routine, whether it is going for a daily walk or enjoying a dance class at your local fitness center. Ask a friend or relative to stay with your loved one, if necessary, so that you can get out and continue to enjoy the activities that will help you to stay healthy. Taking care of yourself as well as your loved one at this stage is critical.

If you haven't had a regular exercise routine, now is a great time to start! It's difficult to care for others if you neglect your own health and become ill. The benefits of physical activity are far reaching – physical, mental, emotional, and social. Exercising with a friend is a great way to spend time together and you are much more likely to stick to a routine if someone else is counting on you.

For a person with dementia, healthy physical activity can also have many benefits. Improving physical health, sleep, mood, and psychological well-being are a few of the ways being active can help. Physical activity can be achieved by doing daily tasks around the house as well as by participating in leisure activities. If the person with dementia lives with you, include them in the day-to-day chores of running the household – preparing meals, setting and clearing the table, washing dishes, doing laundry, folding clothes, dusting, sweeping the floor, making the bed, wiping a counter top, etc. Any activity that has a person up and moving is a good activity! It will provide them with small increments of physical activity as well as contribute to their sense of purpose and overall well-being.

If you are looking for leisure activities, there are many ideas out there. It really depends on the person and what they will enjoy. Be sure to take into account their interests and what they will find interesting and fun. Have a variety of options available and try a different one each day. Here are a few ideas that you can try that don't cost a lot of money or require fancy equipment:

- Toss bean bags into a basket
- Have an indoor snowball fight with foam balls
- Carpet Bowling (make your own pins with empty water bottles and sand)
- Turn on the music and dance
- Do seated exercises

Persons with dementia often respond well to routine so try to incorporate physical activity into every day at the same time.

Getting outside for a walk is perhaps the best activity of all! It's free and there are so many benefits to being outside and feeling the fresh air. In addition to the physical exercise, you may bump into a neighbor, have a visit with a cat or dog, admire the birds, smell the flowers, stop into a corner store, or take a break on a bench and watch the traffic go by. Each day will be different and you are likely to encounter many conversation starters to stimulate some interesting discussion.

Whatever activities you choose, make sure they are suited to the person with dementia and their abilities. Think of their likes and dislikes and set them up for success. It's also a good idea to check with a doctor before you start anything new. Now let's get moving!