DICE

Dementia-Inclusive Choices for Exercise

Being active at home:

A resource for people living with dementia and their care partners

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

PiDC Partnerships in Dementia Care

Enhancing Dementia Care for Everyone

In this resource, you will find:

- Physical activity guidelines for people living with, or at risk of, dementia
- Advice for planning an at-home physical activity plan
- Strategies that may help support physical activity among people living with dementia

Regular physical activity improves balance and mobility, supports independence, and improves heart and bone health for both people living with dementia and individuals with no cognitive impairment. Being active can also improve your mood and help you manage stress.

Physical activity guidelines

The Ontario Brain Institute recommends that people living with dementia, or those at risk, follow the general physical activity guidelines for older adults:

	150 minutes per week of moderate or vigorous intensity physical activity (for example, brisk walking is moderate; jogging is vigorous)
	Twice a week strength training
	Balance training for those at risk of falls

Notes:

- People living with dementia may also benefit from exercise levels lower than the above recommendations (as little as 45 minutes per week), especially if they are inactive to start. Start easy and simple and progress over time.
- Starting or transitioning to a physical activity routine at home can be challenging, whether or not you have been previously active.
- In this document, we include some advice for supporting physical activity at-home for people living with dementia

Set a routine

- Establish a usual time for exercise.
  - Choose the time when you usually feel most energetic and alert.
  - Mark it in your calendar. Check it off when complete.
  - Set up a regular schedule for eating and drinking water.
- Set up a consistent, safe space to exercise.
  - Create a clutter free exercise space and survey the space for tripping hazards (e.g., loose rugs).
  - Make sure there is enough space for everyone who is participating.
  - Choose a quiet space to minimize distraction.
  - Ensure the room has adequate lighting and that the temperature is comfortable.
  - Consider listening to enjoyable music at low volumes to help with motivation.
- Wear proper exercise attire.
  - Wear comfortable, stretchy clothing.
  - Wear non-slip, supportive footwear to help prevent any slips or falls.

Have an exercise plan to follow

- Having an exercise or physical activity plan before you start helps you stay accountable.
- If you have an instructor that you work with in the community, they may be willing to send exercises or activities that are appropriate to do at home.
- If not, there are a number of on-line resources available:
  - Exercise videos: https://bit.ly/2xKdYB3
  - Exercise videos that include seated options: https://bit.ly/2xBaEs4
  - Photos of exercises: https://bit.ly/34Yys5m
  - Fall prevention exercises: https://bit.ly/2zctxSh
  - Home Support Exercise Program (printer-friendly): https://bit.ly/2wUOOPH
- Choose familiar exercises if possible.
- Walking is a great option, as long as it is safe to do so.

Supporting people living with dementia in physical activity

- Being encouraging, and staying positive and upbeat are great motivators; make sure to pay attention to the types of encouragement that work for the individual!
- Each person living with dementia will need different supports, depending on their abilities and preferences.
- Some things that may be helpful include:
    - **Introducing an exercise:** Show the exercise before doing it, either by demonstrating or by showing a video or image.
    - **Demonstrating an exercise**: Do the exercises together. By standing beside and slightly in front of your partner, they can mimic the exercise.
    - **Tracking exercise**: Assist with counting repetitions, when needed.
    - **Providing feedback**: Help your partner to maintain safe technique by providing encouraging feedback. If changing their form is difficult, let it go as long as they are not hurting themselves.
    - **Be flexible**: Some exercise is better than no exercise. If your partner is not up for some or all of the exercise, do not force it. You can try again later.

Safety comes first!

- Choose a location close to a sturdy wall or object, in case you or your partner need something to grab on to for support and balance.
- If you or your partner do not feel confident in an exercise (or supporting an exercise), don’t do it.
- Stop if you feel light-headed, dizzy or feel pain.
- If feelings are severe or do not subside, call 911, telehealth, or call your doctor.

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