

Moderate Exercise Helps Prevent Alzheimers

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. Sedentary /'sednteri/ (Adjective) involving or spending a lot of time sitting
Example: A lot of people gained weight when they started having sedentary lifestyles during the pandemic.
2. Impairment /im'perment/ (Noun) the state of having a part of the body or brain that does not work correctly
Example: The old woman has a hearing impairment and is using a hearing aid.
3. Intensity /in'tensiti:/ (Noun) the quality of being very strong or forceful
Example The intensity of exercise is also important for losing weight.
4. Intriguing /in'tri:ɡɪŋ/ (Adjective) causing one to feel interested or curious
Example: The woman found her colleague's statement really intriguing.
5. Isolated /'aɪsə,leɪtɪd/ (Adjective) without much contact with other people
Example: She isolated herself for a week after learning that she contracted the virus.
6. Stimulation /,stimju'leɪʃn/ (Noun) the action of causing someone to feel interested, enthusiastic, or excited
Example: The reward serves as her stimulation for working harder.



New research hints that simple exercises might help older Americans with mild memory problems. The research, which was presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference, included about 296 sedentary older adults with mild cognitive impairment (MCI), a condition that sometimes comes before Alzheimer's. Half the participants were given moderate-intensity exercises, like using an exercise bike, that increased their heart rate to about 120 beats per minute for 30 to 40 minutes. The other group did stretching and balance exercises that only raised their heart rate a little bit.

Both groups worked with trainers twice a week at YMCAs around the country — and when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and gyms were closed, trainers helped them keep moving at home over video call. They also exercised on their own twice a week. After a year, testing showed cognition had not worsened in either group, said lead researcher Laura Baker, a neuroscientist at Wake Forest School of Medicine. Nor did scans show the decrease in brain size that is seen with worsening memory problems, she said. By comparison, similar MCI patients in another long-term study of brain health that did not exercise showed significant cognitive decline over a year.

However, the National Institute on Aging caution that including non-exercisers in the same study would have offered a better comparison. But the results suggest "this is doable for everybody" — not just seniors healthy enough to do moderate-intensity exercise, said Baker. She added that exercise should be included as a prevention method for at-risk seniors.

Maria Carrillo, chief scientific officer at the Alzheimer's Association, said the study is intriguing because the pandemic hit halfway through, leaving participants socially isolated — something known to increase people's risk of memory problems. There is growing urgency to find out whether steps people can take today — like exercise — might offer at least some protection from dementia. Baker's next study will look at whether adding exercise to other things such as a heart-healthy diet, brain games and social stimulation together reduce the risk of dementia.

DISCUSSION

1. What do the older people you know do to keep their minds active?
2. Is social isolation among older people a major problem in your country?
3. In your opinion, what are the best ways to slow down the aging process?
4. How have your exercise habits changed over the years?
5. Why do you think in Japan diet means including exercise whereas in the English language it only refers to the food you eat?