

Caregiver Assistance News

"Caring for You - Caring for Others"

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence,
Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**



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Changes in Mobility - Exercise

Physical activity and good nutrition are perfect partners in good health. Together, they help in managing weight and providing energy. Physical activity not only burns calories, but it can also:

- Make the most of muscle strength, or even build strength, depending on the program.
- Slowly increase the ability to do more for longer periods of time.
- Increase range of motion and joint flexibility (the ability to move easily).
- Strengthen the heart.
- Decrease feelings of fatigue.
- Decrease symptoms of depression.
- Maintain regular bowel and bladder functions.
- Cut down on the risk of skin breakdown and irritation.
- Protect weight-bearing bone mass (spine, hips, legs).



Good physical fitness is made up of three types of exercise: stretching, strengthening, and aerobics. Each is important by itself, but together, they can help the person in your care remain active as long as possible. This will help the person deal better with the changes illness may bring.

A person should always gently stretch before exercise. This warms the muscles, helps prevent stiffness, and improves flexibility and balance. The person should work at his or her own pace, even if it seems very slow. Encourage the person in your care, even if the exercises seem difficult at first. Watch for signs of fatigue. Always check with the doctor before starting an exercise program.

Physical Therapy After Illness, Injury or Inactivity

Physical therapy is part of the process of relearning how to function after an injury, illness, or period of inactivity. If muscles are not used, they shorten and tighten, making joint motion painful.

A physical therapist treats a person to relieve pain, build up and restore muscle function, and maintain

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the best possible performance. The therapist does this by using physical means such as active and passive exercise, massage, heat, water, and electricity. A physical therapist sets up the goals of treatment with patient and caregiver and teaches an exercise program, instructs in daily functions, and teaches safe ways to move.

1. Stretching

Regular s-t-r-e-t-c-h-i-n-g is the first step, and it can be one of the most enjoyable. Stretching helps muscle rigidity (stiffness). It also helps muscles and joints stay flexible (able to bend). People who are more flexible have an easier time with everyday movement. Stretching increases range of motion of joints and helps with good posture. It protects against muscle strains or sprains, improves circulation, and releases muscle tension.

Stretching can be done at any time. The person in your care can start the day by stretching before getting out of bed. Have the person stretch throughout the day, while watching television or riding in a car



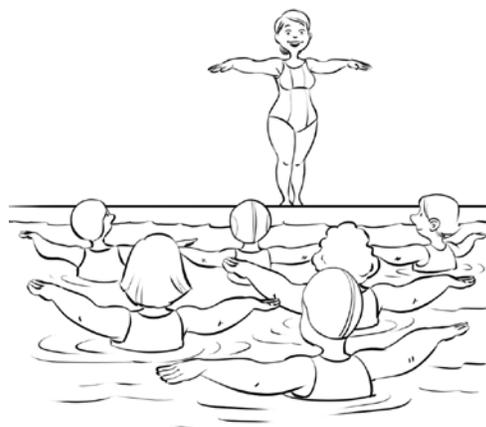
2. Strengthening

Muscles often weaken as a result of not being used. Weight training can be a major help in restoring these muscles. Targeted strength training in patients with muscle weakness significantly increases muscle power without any negative effects.

Most physical trainers do not have enough special training to work with people with disabilities, but increasingly it is possible to find special needs strength trainers who may be able to help.

3. Aerobics

Aerobic activities raise the heart rate and breathing, and promote cardiovascular (heart and lung) fitness. Water therapy is a time-tested form of healing. It is also a safe way for a person with a disability and older adults to exercise because there is no danger of falling. Floating in water allows easy movement and little strain on joints and muscles. For those who have some weakness on one side of the body, water



exercises are a good alternative because the affected side floats and feels lighter in water. Using a kickboard or simply walking in place in water may produce aerobic benefit. Water also resists movement, so it produces increased heart rate in less time. Talk to a physical therapist about whether a water aerobics class might be appropriate for the person in your care. Aerobic exercise on land for older adults or people with disabilities is more problematic. An option is chair exercises. These allow the person to remain seated while providing aerobic benefit. Several video products offer complete workouts, as do some TV programs.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Motivation

Motivation is the #1 factor determining whether people change their lifestyles or fail to follow their exercise and diet prescriptions. While motivation is an inside job, the caregiver has a part to play. Do what you can to make exercise fun. Make the new diet an experiment. If you make either diet or exercise too important, any failure becomes that much more significant. Keep it light hearted and join in as much as possible.



No single day of exercise or eating right makes much of a difference in your or your care receiver's health, but 30 days do. Sixty days makes even more of an impact; a year's worth of a new lifestyle will provide remarkable shifts in mood and self-esteem. People who take up the challenge presented by diet and exercise prescriptions make huge strides in their physical and emotional recovery. Imagine what it does to their independence!

Memory Care

Activities that had meaning to the person with Alzheimer's before they became ill, such as playing baseball with the family, may still be enjoyable if you plan the activity to take into account their remaining strengths and limitations. For example, the person may not be able to keep score or follow all the rules, but may be glad to throw the ball. If they used to play tennis, they may enjoy hitting the ball back and forth.



Kinship/Grandparent Caregivers We Need Your Voice!!!



The Caregiver Support Program at the Area Agency on Aging District 7 (AAA7) wants to hear feedback from you – what you need and how you can be better supported.

If you are raising a grandchild or other relative because their own parents are unable or unavailable to care for them, please take a few moments to log on to our website to take a special survey and share with us what you need and how we can help. If you know someone in this role, please share the survey information with them.

**Find the survey at the AAA7's website on the Home Page:
www.aaa7.org**



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Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at info@aaa7.org.

Safety Tips - Alzheimer's Safety - Falls

Due to changes in the brain that are caused by Alzheimer's disease (AD), people with AD are at especially high risk of falling. Slower reaction time, difficulty recognizing changes in the height or depth of a step, for example, can lead to tripping and falling. Changes in balance and coordination combined with poor memory can make it difficult for a person with AD to get from one place to another and avoid hazardous objects at the same time. They may miss a step while looking for a door or trying to listen to someone's conversation. You can reduce the risk of falling by modifying the environment. You can also try to help the person in your care remain as active and flexible as possible.



Before starting any type of exercise routine, get advice from your physician. Start slowly with only moderate effort. Give the senior time to build strength and stamina. Any amount of exercise helps reduce risk, and the benefits of exercise are cumulative, so find a way to make it easy and enjoyable to exercise.