

Physical exercise and dementia

Physical exercise is an important part of a healthy lifestyle, contributing to general fitness, muscle control and coordination, and to a sense of wellbeing. According to Dementia Australia, physical exercise is also essential for maintaining adequate blood flow to the brain and may stimulate brain cell growth and survival.

Does physical exercise have benefits for people with dementia?

Physical exercise should be continued for as long as possible for people with dementia, as it has been found to have a number of benefits. It can help prevent muscle weakness, mobility problems and other health complications associated with inactivity. It can help promote a normal day-night routine, improve mood and increase social participation.

The benefits of exercise are clear when considering other factors associated with the risk of developing dementia. People who exercise regularly are less likely to experience heart disease and stroke, both factors that are associated with an increased risk of developing dementia. Exercise is also important in reducing the risk of high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and obesity, all of which are risk factors for dementia.

Exercise also plays a part in reducing stress and depression, which are commonly experienced by people with dementia. Repetitive activity such as walking on a treadmill or using an exercise bike can help reduce anxiety for people with dementia as there are no decisions to make or things to remember about what to do next.

An exercise program incorporated into a person's lifestyle in the early stages of dementia is more likely to be maintained as the condition progresses, extending the benefits to health and well-being for as long as possible. In moderate to late stages of dementia, support and encouragement from family, carers and service providers is important to ensure that an exercise program is maintained. Accessing a structured exercise program with trained staff and using family, friends and volunteers can help to ensure this. The program should include appropriate elements of aerobic exercise, resistance training and flexibility and balance exercises.

Tips for exercise

- Always warm up before beginning your exercise routine, and cool down at the end.
- Start with shorter sessions and work your way up.
- Try water exercise, such as aqua aerobics. These are often easier on the joints and require less balance.
- Work out in a safe environment; avoid slippery floors, poor lighting, floor rugs, and other potential dangers.
- If you have difficulty maintaining your balance, exercise within reach of a rail or something to grab onto.
- If at any time you feel sick or you begin to hurt, STOP the activity and seek the advice of your health professional on how to manage this.
- Most important of all, select activities you enjoy and stick with it. Some suggestions include: gardening, walking, swimming, water aerobics, yoga and tai chi.



Stewart likes to maintain his fitness by taking to the greens.



The Byron carer

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www.byronrespite.com.au

Byron Shire Respite Service is located at the Brunswick Valley Community Centre, South Beach Rd, Brunswick Heads.

Our incorporated non-government community based organisation is managed by a local committee and covers the shires of Byron, Ballina and Lismore.

NDIS Registered Provider

Respite care is delivered through our Flexible Respite, Day Respite and Social Support projects, with a person centred enablement approach across the respite continuum.

Telephone Nicole on:

02) 6685 1619

or Janine on: 02) 6685 1629

Website: www.byronrespite.com.au

Email: service@byronrespite.com.au



Byron Shire Respite Service acknowledge and pay respect to the Arakwal people of the Bundjalung nation, the traditional owners of the land on which we live and care – and pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging.

If you're concerned about an older person being anxious or depressed, or just not coping, then it is important to take the first step. Begin a conversation – your support and concern may make all the difference.

According to Beyond Blue (that works with people living with anxiety and depression, their friends and families, to raise community awareness of anxiety and depression and reduce associated stigma) talking openly provides the best opportunity to share experiences, learn from each other and offer support.

Having a conversation with older people about anxiety and depression

By having conversations – even if they are difficult – can help people to get the support they need and look forward to a much healthier life.

It can be hard to talk to an older person about their mental health sometimes, particularly if it is someone that you have always looked up to and relied upon. They may have supported you through many difficult times but now it might be time to return the favour. Be patient and compassionate as you talk openly with them about what is going on and why you are worried about them.

Talking about thoughts and feelings can be difficult for anyone.

For older people, reluctance to talk can be due to a range of fears or past experiences that leave them feeling:

- ashamed to ask for help
- uncomfortable talking about feelings
- fearful of becoming a burden
- misunderstood by younger people
- uninformed and without the relevant knowledge
- fearful they will be treated differently if they admit to not coping.
- worried what will happen if they admit to having mental health problems because of how mental health issues were treated in the past.

Getting ready to talk

- Make your conversation as normal and natural as possible.
- Conversations are best in a relaxed environment with people

that they trust and relate to.

- Look for opportunities to talk. It might not be an 'organised' conversation, instead it might happen while you walk or go on an outing.
- Respect the person's privacy.
- Think about when the person might be most receptive to your conversation. If they are tired, busy or distracted by other issues then they may not respond to the conversation as you had hoped.
- Think about what has worked well when you have had to have tricky conversations in the past.
- Listen to your own thoughts and feelings about the situation. If you find yourself getting frustrated or annoyed, postpone the conversation.

Raising the issue

- Let the older person know that you care about them and that you have noticed changes in them lately. Provide examples if you can.
- As you ask questions, reassure them that you are there to help. You don't want to interfere; rather, you want to better understand what is happening and how you can support them.
- Try to understand their reaction to your concerns.

- If they are reluctant to talk try to understand why and help them to feel at ease.
- If they feel overwhelmed reassure them that together you can find a way through.
- Appreciate what they share with you, no matter how small.
- If they are emotional sit with them, offer a tissue, and let them know that crying is OK.

Try to understand

To understand you need to listen, but a good listener is more than just someone who hears the story. It's about approaching their story with curiosity and concern, and trying not to jump in to offer solutions. Sometimes just sitting quietly also gives them time to work out how to express how they feel.

Be supportive

Supporting someone you care about can take many emotional and practical forms. It is about finding the balance and understanding that what they need will change over time.

Depression in adults over 65 years is sometimes difficult to recognise, as the symptoms are often similar to the problems of ageing.

- Features can include unexplained physical symptoms, memory loss and various behavioural changes.
- It is important to address related factors that may be contributing to lowered mood states (i.e. psychosocial problems, loneliness and isolation) however, clinical depression in an older person must be treated separately to issues of ageing.
- Older age does not diminish the effectiveness of treatments. Improvement and recovery is possible with the right treatment and management strategies.
- As with treating any depression, the most effective treatments should factor in specific features, causes and stressful life-events for that person.

To find out more, visit: <https://blackdoginstitute.org.au>

Ask how you can help

- Be sensitive about how you approach this as some older people are very proud of their independence.
- Value experience and wisdom. Most older people have lived through times of significant stress, grief or perhaps war.
- Offers of help should be provided with care and respect and encourage independence.
- Balance doing things to help the person while encouraging them to make decisions.
- Don't underestimate the value of your company, support and a listening ear.

Check they are safe

If they are at risk of hurting themselves or someone else you need to talk about it. If you are not sure, ask. Talking about suicide can help you understand what level of support is needed and older people appreciate honesty and openness.

- If they have made plans to end their life you need to act immediately. Call emergency services (triple zero – 000),
- If they have had suicidal thoughts but have not made plans, or you are not sure about their safety, encourage them to get help from their doctor, or telephone:

beyondblue Support Service

tel: 1300 22 4636

visit: www.beyondblue.org.au

or telephone Lifeline on: 13 11 14.

They, or you, can have a confidential conversation with a trained professional in person or over the phone to make a plan to keep them safe.

When they don't want to talk and don't want help

Not everyone wants to talk or get help. They may not be ready for others to get involved or they might prefer to speak to their health professional rather than talk openly with their family. Try to understand where they are coming from and respect their right not to seek help but keep trying to talk to them about it.

NEW hotline for older Australians during COVID-19 pandemic
The Council on the Ageing (COTA) Australia, National Seniors Australia, Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) and Dementia Australia have banded together, supported by the Commonwealth Government, to create the Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line.
If you have questions about the pandemic or would like information on the up-to-date guidelines, call 1800 171 866 to speak to friendly, specially trained staff from a senior's advocacy organisation.

Need support ?

- **Australian Government Department of Health** For more information about COVID-19 call the Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080 or www.health.gov.au
- **Carer Gateway** telephone: 1800 422 737 for information about planned & emergency respite & other carer supports. www.carergateway.gov.au
- **My Aged Care** telephone: 1800 200 422 for information about the Australian Government's aged care system and services. www.myagedcare.gov.au

If you require emergency respite, please call the Carer Gateway: 1800 422 737

- **Telephone Janine or Nicole at Byron Shire Respite Service to discuss your role as a carer.** telephone: 02) 6685 1619
- **National Dementia Helpline** telephone: 1800 100 500
- **Carers Counselling Service** telephone: 02) 6628 6416
- **Carers NSW** telephone: 1800 242 636
- **Sandra Kimball Counselling** telephone: 0458 175 962
- **National Continence Helpline** telephone: 1800 330 066
- **NSW Elder Abuse Helpline** telephone: 1800 628 221

Aids:

- **Byron Ballina Home Maintenance and Modification Service 1/65 Centennial Circuit, Byron Bay** telephone: 02) 6685 7312
- **Bright Sky Cards for Continence Aids Payment Scheme (CAPS)** telephone: 1300 886 601

Need Transport?

- **Byron Shire Respite Service** can assist with transport to medical appointments. Telephone Janine: 02) 6685 1629
- **Byron Shire Limousines** telephone: 02) 6685 5008 Travel for medical appointments free with travel voucher or for Veteran and Widow Gold Card holders
- **Brunswick Limousines** telephone David on: 0412 855 747
- **Tweed Byron Ballina Community Transport** tel: 1300 875 895 Tweed Byron Ballina Community Transport provide transport to medical appointments, weekly & fortnightly shopping outings & monthly social outings. The service is funded to support older people living at home independently or have a permanent disability or Indigenous Australians aged over 50 years. Phone Kathryn in the Byron office on: 1300 875 895 for transport to medical appointments or Amanda for any shopping bus or social bus enquiries.

Dementia and Depression are big risk factors for Delirium

What is Delirium?

Delirium is often called a brain attack, is life threatening and requires urgent attention. It comes on rapidly and can be recognised by a changed behavior in the older person that fluctuates through the day.

Delirium causes distress for the person with delirium, their families and treating health care providers.

Delirium is a life-threatening medical emergency.

Keep an eye out for changes in the person that are new.

Delirium has a rapid onset and fluctuating course, with sudden changes to thought, memory, attention, behaviour, perception, orientation and or consciousness.

Symptoms can include a rapid onset of confusion, hallucinations, anxiety, fear or paranoia, irritability or frustration, rapid and unpredictable mood changes, sleeplessness, restlessness and agitation, or sleepiness, sluggishness and apathy.

As delirium develops over a short period of time (usually within hours or days) and symptoms tend to fluctuate throughout the day, family and carers are in a good position to notice changes.

Delirium is more common in older people due to higher rates of dementia and co-morbidities.

Is Delirium common?

Delirium is a common condition in older hospitalised people, but it can also occur less commonly in people who are not in hospital.

Over 30% of admissions to hospital from aged care services are due to delirium. As delirium is preventable these are unnecessary hospital admissions. Delirium is potentially preventable in up to two thirds of hospitalised patients and is often treatable if it develops.

During COVID-19 a focus on delirium prevention, monitoring and management can help us keep our older loved-ones safer at home.

To find out more about delirium, visit: https://carers.dementia.org.au/files/helpsheets/Helpsheet-DementiaQandA21_Delirium_english.pdf



Meaningful contact with other people and being part of a community can help you feel more positive and avoid loneliness.

Many people feel lonely at different times in their lives. Feeling lonely is a normal human emotion and is simply a sign of wanting contact with people. It is often the result of external circumstances, such as the loss of a loved one, being stuck at home alone due to the current COVID-19 pandemic or major lifestyle changes. However, feeling lonely for extended periods of time can affect your physical and mental wellbeing.

According to beyondblue, loneliness is not an inevitable part of getting older, and there are lots of things you can do if you are feeling lonely or disconnected.

Visit beyondblue to read and download their booklet at: <https://resources.beyondblue.org.au/prism/file?token=BL/1366>

There are practical things you can do to make new connections with people. These include: researching your options online or in the local newspaper, talking to family and friends, talking to a health professional if you feel overwhelmed or anxious, connecting online to a new group, old friends or family or asking for social support from a local community service.

Byron Shire Respite Service's Social Support Program provides a range of person-centred services for socially isolated people.

Services can include day trips, friendly home visiting, social outings, transport, shopping assistance and accompanying to medical appointments. If you would like to learn how we can provide you with social support please contact Janine on 02) 6685 1629. Or email: socialsupport@byronrespite.com.au

BYRON SHIRE RESPITE SERVICE

Byron Shire Respite Service Inc. is supported by the Australian Government Department of Health. Visit www.health.gov.au

Our Vision Statement:

With a focus on caring wellness and reablement provide person centred support to people with diverse needs to enhance their quality of life and maintain a familiar lifestyle in the community and in their own homes.



Although funding for the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) has been provided by the Australian Government, the material contained herein does not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Australian Government.