

3 Nutrition
and Dementia

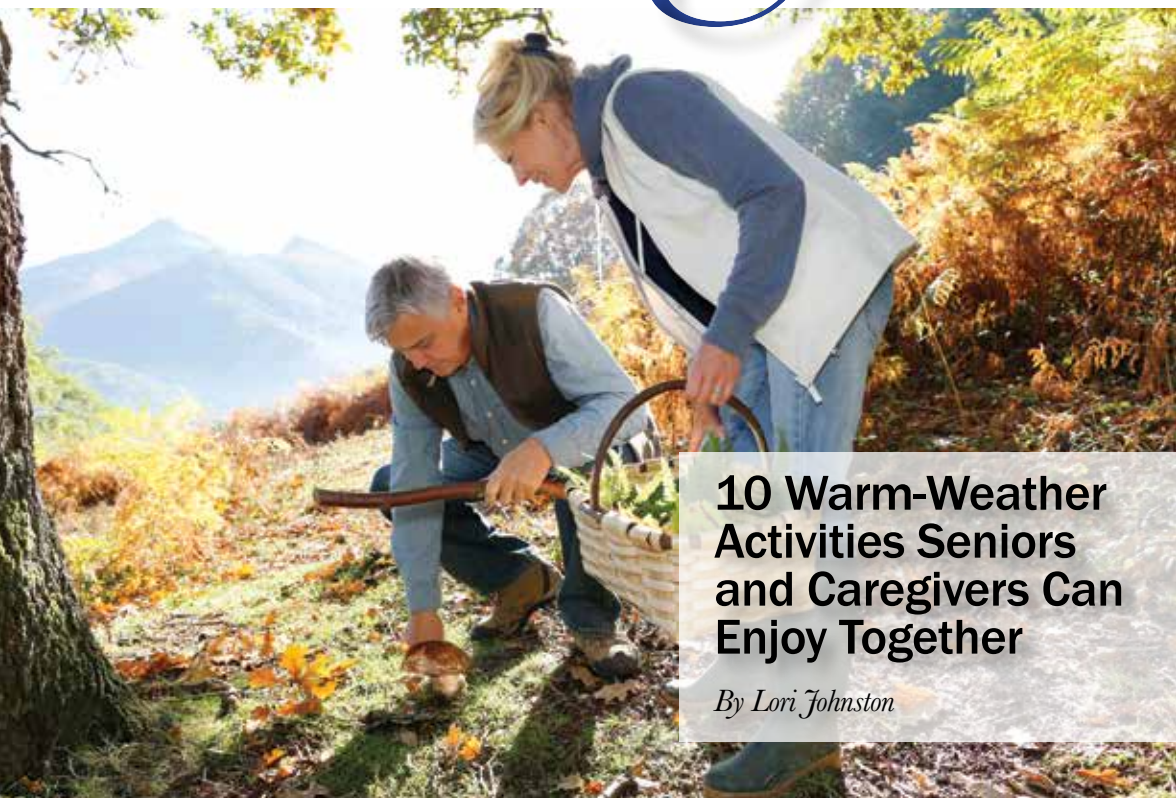
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Teaches Kids about
Love and Kindness

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10 Warm-Weather Activities Seniors and Caregivers Can Enjoy Together

By Lori Johnston

Enjoying a breezy spring day or the warm summer temperatures doesn't have to be a distant memory for elders and caregivers. Finding an interesting activity that is suitable for a senior's abilities takes some creativity and planning, but it is well worth switching up the routine and getting out of the house.

The Benefits of Getting Outside

A main advantage of heading outdoors, even for a short period of time, is being able to soak up some sunlight. Sun exposure generates vitamin D,

which is necessary for a healthy brain, bones and muscles, says Dr. Michael Raab, a geriatrician with Lee Health System in Fort Myers, Florida. Some doctors even prescribe sunlight as a source of vitamin D, which research has shown can improve cognitive function and mood.

In addition to the physical benefits of natural sunlight and fresh air, being outside provides mental and emotional benefits. Getting out enables elders to socialize with new people, and many outdoor activities provide opportunities for interacting with

children and animals. Such activities can give people an extra spring in their step and rejuvenate them, says Christina Chartrand, vice president of training and staff development for Senior Helpers, a nationwide in-home care company.

Ideas for Outdoor Activities

When selecting an activity to do with your loved one, focus on hobbies and interests that they used to enjoy and get creative with new options they might find fun and rewarding.

- **Catch a sporting event.** Attending a grandchild's soccer game or a professional baseball game can be an action-packed way for your loved one to reconnect with one of their favorite pastimes.
 - **Fish for fun.** You can cast a rod from a dock, pier, or other location, even if someone has mobility problems or uses a wheelchair. Check your state's tourism or state park websites to see if they provide listings of accessible fishing locations. Many areas across the country have also started offering all-terrain wheelchairs for check out or rental that can help a loved one with mobility issues get closer to the water.
 - **Be a tourist.** If you live in a city, take an open-air bus or trolley tour to see the local sights. Another option could be a boat tour, depending on what type of equipment an elder needs to take with them. "It gets you both outside, but you don't necessarily have to be walking," Chartrand says. A Sunday drive around town can also allow a senior to check out happenings in the community that interest them. This could be new construction, blooming flowers and trees, or even festivals and community events.
 - **Take a dip.** For some folks, this might entail putting a foot in the pool, while others may be able to handle low-impact water aerobics. If a senior is willing and able, spending some time in the pool is an excellent way
- for them to incorporate some physical activity into their routine that seems more like relaxing than a workout.
 - **Stroll around.** If a walk is possible, start slow and work up to longer outings. Either keep the first few walks short, or bring along a walker or wheelchair in case your loved one gets tired and needs to rest along the way or requires help getting back.
 - **Be an animal lover.** This could be as simple as encouraging a loved one to sit outside and enjoy the sights and sounds of a birdhouse, bird feeder or bird bath in the yard, or could mean an outing to the zoo or local dog park. There are plenty of options for seniors who enjoy animals to get outside and either interact with or observe nature.
 - **Go fly a kite.** Head to a park or beach and get a kite soaring. Let an elderly individual take control, which they can do while sitting down. If children are around, they can get involved by trying to keep the kite in the air.
 - **Picnic outdoors.** Picnics are another flexible activity that you can plan at a park, in your own backyard, or on the surrounding grounds of a long-term care facility. At the park, seniors can watch children run around and enjoy the buzz of outdoor activity. Make sure to locate an area with comfortable seating and plenty of shade in advance, or remember to bring your own.
 - **Attend community events.** From Memorial Day concerts to Fourth of July parades and fireworks, there are plenty of community events during spring and summer that offer opportunities for elders to get out and be part of the crowd. Many communities offer outdoor musical performances, art shows, car shows, flea markets and more. Peruse the events section of the local newspaper to find happenings that fit your loved one's interests and abilities.
 - **Go out for a treat.** Most seniors have a favorite snack or restaurant

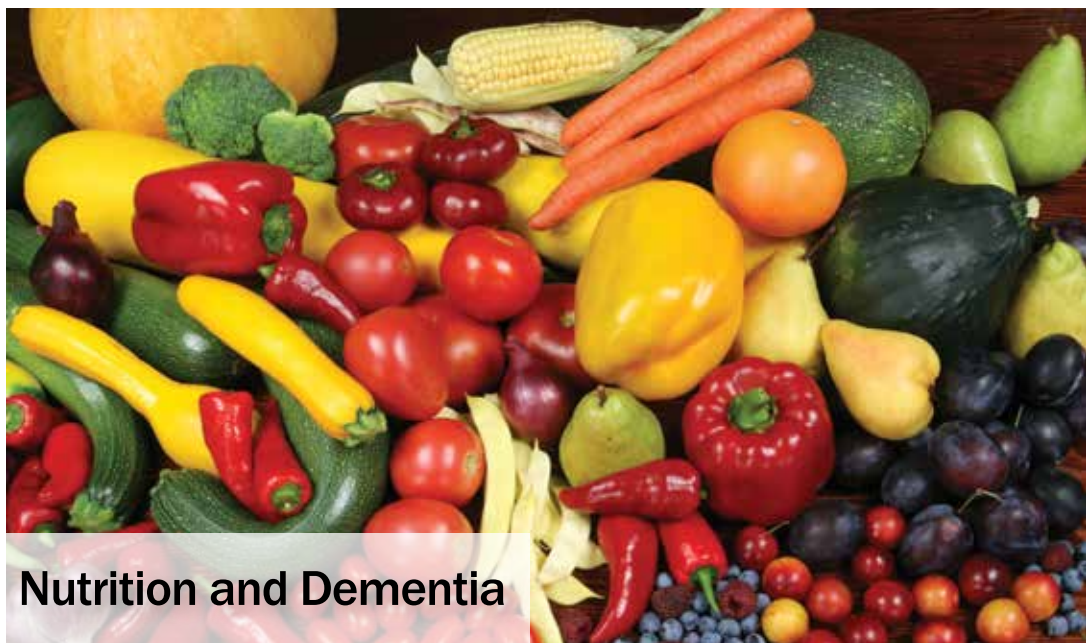
that picks their spirits right up. Instead of limiting this indulgence to special occasions or the post-doctor's appointment routine, make an outing out of it just because. This could consist of getting an ice cream cone from the local Dairy Queen, a coffee and pastry from a favorite breakfast spot, or a lunch special from the diner around the corner. If the weather is nice, enjoy your goodies at a patio table.

Older bodies don't adjust to temperature changes or perceive thirst as well as younger ones. With each of these activities, be sure to watch your loved one for signs of fatigue, thirst, sunburn, and overheating that could signal it's time to

leave, perhaps with a promise to return at another time.

Encourage Them to Participate

Use these ideas as a springboard. You know your loved one best. What did they enjoy when they were younger? What is something they always wanted to try? Don't be afraid to ask what they miss doing or what they'd like to revisit. They may not hear those questions very often. You may get some resistance, so just say with a smile that it would make you very happy to do this with them. Have a couple of suggestions prepared to choose from and head outside to enjoy the day together.



Nutrition and Dementia

We all need to follow a healthy, balanced and nutritious diet to keep our bodies performing at their best. This is certainly true for a loved one with dementia. Poor nutrition can exacerbate some of the behavioral symptoms associated with dementia and Alzheimer's disease. In extreme cases, it can also lead to weight loss caused by a poor appetite and/or poor nutrition.

Studies show that the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's can be reduced in early stages by following a comprehensive op-

timized nutrition plan. There are a wide variety of good "brain foods" that have been found to aid cognitive functioning and help to ward off brain decline. For your loved one with dementia, incorporating more of these foods into their diet could mean the difference between a good day and a bad day.

1. Dark Skinned Fruits

You've probably read about the general health benefits from eating dark-skinned fruits such as blueberries,

blackberries, strawberries, cherries, plums, and red grapes. There's a good reason to give them to a loved one with dementia, as well.

A 2012 study found that a diet high in strawberries and blueberries and other similar fruits is linked to a slower mental decline in areas like memory and focus. As it turns out, nature's candy is packed with brain-boosting capabilities, too!

2. Dark Colored Vegetables

Did your mother ever nag you to eat your spinach? It might have seemed like the worst thing in the world at the time, but there's more to eating dark-colored veggies than just a balanced diet.

According to researchers, spinach is high in the antioxidant lutein, which is thought to help protect against symptoms of cognitive decline. Other healthy vegetable choices include broccoli, kale, onions, red bell peppers and eggplant.

3. Avocodos

Another good-for-your-brain green food? Avocados! Delicious in a salad or as a dip for healthy chips, avocados are full of healthy monounsaturated fats that enhance vascular health and blood flow. Try avocado mashed on wheat or whole grain toast with some cracked pepper as a tasty breakfast option.

4. Nuts

Go nuts for healthy nut snacks, such as almonds, walnuts and pecans. Nuts are high in healthy fats and a good snack choice to feed a loved one with dementia to help maintain a healthy bodyweight.

Walnuts are an especially good source of alpha linolenic acid (ALA), which enhances blood flow, thus improving oxygen flow to the brain. We suggest mixing them with some of the berries we mentioned above for the perfect salty/sweet brain-boosting combo!

5. Cold Water Fish

There are lots of delicious fish choices that are loaded with EPA and DHA. These omega-3 fatty acids boost com-

munication among brain cells and assist in regulating neurotransmitters responsible for mental focus. Good fish choices? Try sardines, trout, salmon, tuna, cod, halibut, and mackerel.

6. Chocolate

Dark chocolate is an excellent anti-oxidant rich in flavonoids, a type of anti-oxidant that helps improve blood flow (and thus brain function), by regulating cholesterol and reducing blood pressure. You can even go double-duty on the brain benefits by opting for a dark chocolate with almonds or walnuts added.

Too much of a good thing can take away from its benefits, though, so just make sure you don't over indulge. Stick to one or two squares max!

7. Eggs

Another brain-boosting superfood that's good for dementia patients comes from a somewhat unexpected place. Eggs, along with wheat germ, offer a good source of choline. Choline is a nutrient that aids the body to make acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter that can help boost memory.

8. Olive Oil

Olive oil is high in monounsaturated fats; studies have shown that this type of fat can actually slow down brain aging. In addition, this popular oil is super versatile in cooking. Use it as a substitute for butter in almost any recipe and enhance the flavors of different kinds of meats (especially fish!) and vegetables. Or, drizzle it over a salad with your favorite vinegar for a light and tasty dressing!

When you're the caretaker for a loved one with dementia, prioritizing good nutrition is important. A diet that's high in brain foods and low in added sugar and extra salt can help your loved one stay healthier and happier over a longer time period.

Senior Solutions Management Group

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Dental Care Tips from Alzheimer's Association

As Alzheimer's progresses, the person with dementia may forget how to brush his or her teeth or forget why it's important. As a caregiver, you may have to assist or take a more hands-on approach. Proper oral care is necessary to prevent eating difficulties, digestive problems and infections.

Daily oral care: In the early stages of Alzheimer's, dental care focuses on prevention. Getting check-ups and cleaning and flossing teeth regularly can prevent the need for extensive procedures later on, when the person with dementia may be less able to tolerate them.

During the middle and late stages of Alzheimer's, oral health may become more challenging. The person may forget what to do with toothpaste or how to rinse, or may be resistant to assistance from others.

Loss of appetite may be a sign of mouth pain or ill fitting-dentures.

Try these tips:

Provide short, simple instructions. Explain dental care by breaking direc-

tions into steps. "Brush your teeth" by itself may be too vague. Instead, walk the person through the process. Say: "Hold your toothbrush." "Put paste on the brush." Then, "Brush your teeth."

Use a "watch me" technique. Hold a toothbrush and show the person how to brush his or her teeth. Or, put your hand over the person's hand, gently guiding the brush. If the person seems agitated or uncooperative, postpone brushing until later in the day.

Keep the teeth and mouth clean. Very gently brush the person's teeth, gums, tongue and roof of the mouth at least twice a day, with the last brushing after the evening meal and any nighttime liquid medication. Allow plenty of time and find a comfortable position if you must do the brushing yourself. Gently place the toothbrush in the person's mouth at a 45 degree angle so you massage gum tissue as you clean the teeth.

If the person wears dentures, rinse them with plain water after meals and brush them daily to remove food particles. Each night, remove them and soak

in a cleanser or mouthwash. Then, use a soft toothbrush or moistened gauze pad to clean the gums, tongue and other soft mouth tissues.

Try different types of toothbrushes. You may find that a soft bristled children's toothbrush works better than a hard bristled adult's brush. Or that a long handled or angled brush is easier to use than a standard toothbrush. Experiment until you find the best choice. Be aware that electric dental appliances may confuse a person with Alzheimer's.

Floss regularly. Most dentists recommend flossing daily. If using floss is distressing to the person with Alzheimer's, try using a "proxbrush" to clean between teeth instead.

Be aware of potential mouth pain. Investigate any signs of mouth discomfort during mealtime. Refusing to eat or strained facial expressions while eating

may indicate mouth pain or dentures that don't fit properly.

Working with the dentist:

Find the right dentist. Contact your local dental society to find the names of professionals who have experience working with people with dementia or with elderly patients.

Coordinate care. Provide the dentist with a list of all health care providers who are caring for the person with dementia, as well as a list of all medications. Certain medications can contribute to dry mouth and other oral health issues.

Keep up with regular dental visits for as long as possible. This will help prevent tooth decay, gum problems, pain and infection.

Alzheimer's Association



This WWII Veteran Teaches Kids About Love and Kindness

Wally Richardson, 95, has been sharing inspirational quotes, bookmarks and "Wallyisms" with kids in his community for over 20 years.

Who he is: Wally Richardson is a 95-year-old World War II Navy veter-

an who spends his mornings inspiring middle schoolers in El Dorado Hills, California. A retired pilot, Wally has made it his job for more than 20 years to school the students in something that's not covered in class: love and kindness. Sitting with his schnauzer

on the bench named for him in front of Marina Village Middle School, Wally waves at parents going by and greets students joyfully with advice such as “Never look down on anyone unless you’re helping them up.” His “Wallyisms” are so popular that the kids engage in a call-and-response with him: “If Plan A doesn’t work,” Wally calls out, and the kids shout back on cue, “There are 25 other letters in the alphabet!”

What he does: Good advice isn’t the only thing Wally dispenses. He gives out hearty fist bumps that he calls kuh-knuckles. With the help of his wife, Jenny, Wally makes bookmarks printed with his favorite sayings, then hands them out to students, along with lighted pens and colorful glass pebbles. Former students often return, clutching the well-worn bookmarks, to thank Wally and update him on their high school or college lives. Wally made such an impression on sixth grader Shelby Le Marquand that she and two other students painted Wally’s Wall, an on-campus mural with his portrait. “You truly think about your life when Wally gives you advice,” Shelby says.

Why he does it: Adolescence can be hard, and young people need all the help they can get. “The future depends on our youth,” Wally says. “This is how I show them that they’re all loved and accepted for who they are.” He believes that love is the force behind anything worth doing. “People think God is up there, but there’s no separation between you and God,” he says. “God is always working

through your soul, through the way you express yourself to others.” Wally definitely practices what he preaches when he says, “Let no one come to you without leaving better and happier.”

How he does it: Wally’s PE coach in junior high exhorted the kids to remember that “what you do makes you what you are.” Wally never forgot those words and decided to see how many motivational sayings he could gather for his own growth. He collected them in a small book and today has almost 300. “Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle,” Wally says, “yet the life of the first candle will not be

shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.”

How you can do it: Be on the lookout for sayings that inspire you, and write them down in a journal. Stick the maxims on the refrigerator, the bathroom mirror or anywhere else you’re sure to see them daily. You can start small by sharing them on Facebook or in your church group. Put them on a bulletin board at work. Wally notes that some teachers post a saying on their classroom blackboard each week and ask the students to memorize it. Use your imagination to spread the joy. As Wally says, “Why not go out on a limb? That’s where the fruit is!”

“People think God is up there, but there’s no separation between you and God,” he says. “God is always working through your soul, through the way you express yourself to others.”

Kimberly Elkins as seen in Guidepost



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