

Supporting Our Caregivers In Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) Learning Study



A 6-week program designed to reduce stress for
caregivers of persons living with dementia

MEET THE RESEARCH & CLINICAL TEAM

We are a team at the Center for Health Outcomes and Interdisciplinary Research (CHOIR) and the Center for Aging and Serious Illness (CASI) at Massachusetts General Hospital. We are passionate about improving the well-being of caregivers!



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We are here to help!



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We're here to help with:

- Scheduling the group and assessments
- Addressing issues or challenges you might face attending group sessions



I'm here to help with:

- Facilitating group sessions
- Learning SOCIAL content!

Role:	Study Clinician/Facilitator
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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for participating in the SOCIAL program! This program was designed to help caregivers of individuals with dementia reduce their overall stress related to behavioral symptoms of those they care for.

Program Goals

1. **Understand** how stress from behavioral symptoms of the person living with dementia impacts caregiver health and wellbeing.
2. Learn about **ways to reduce stress** as a caregiver, including ways to **improve your sleep**.
3. Learn about **nutrition** and how to incorporate it into your life.
4. **Incorporate physical activity** into your daily life.



LOGISTICS

WHAT ARE THE PROGRAM MATERIALS?

- This manual
- For your convenience, you can access content and review resources on the SOCIAL study website:
<https://www.social2studymgh.com/>

WHAT ARE THE PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS?

- Join 5 minutes before the scheduled session time.
- Participate in the entire session and keep your camera on.
- If you need to attend to your loved one or care recipient and need to turn your camera off, just please let the group know.
- Be open to the different perspectives and experiences of other caregivers.
- Let the clinician/facilitator know if you need to miss a session. If you miss a session, please review the content you missed and plan to come 30 minutes before the next session. The clinician will review the material with you.

We are excited to spend the next 6 weeks together learning.

Any questions? Please reach out!

SESSION SCHEDULE

SESSION	SKILLS	DATE
1	Exploring the Stresses of Caregiving for Persons with Dementia	
2	Sleep Hygiene for Caregivers of Persons with Dementia	
3	Physical Activity for Caregivers of Persons with Dementia	
4	Nutrition Information for Caregivers of Persons with Dementia	
5	Healthy Eating for Caregivers of Persons with Dementia	
6	Putting It All Together	

SESSION 1

Exploring the Stresses of Caregiving for Persons with Dementia



In this session we will:

1. **Check-in** and get to know each other
2. **Review** the home practice journal assignment
3. **Learn** about how stress can affect your health
4. **Discuss** caregiver stress and ways to navigate it
5. **Sum things up**



Check-in:

Let's first learn about each other. Let's all say our first names, who we care for, and the city, town or community where we live.

Review home practice: Home practice journal assignment

At the end of each session, we will give you some journal prompts to help you reflect on the session and help incorporate the teaching into your life.

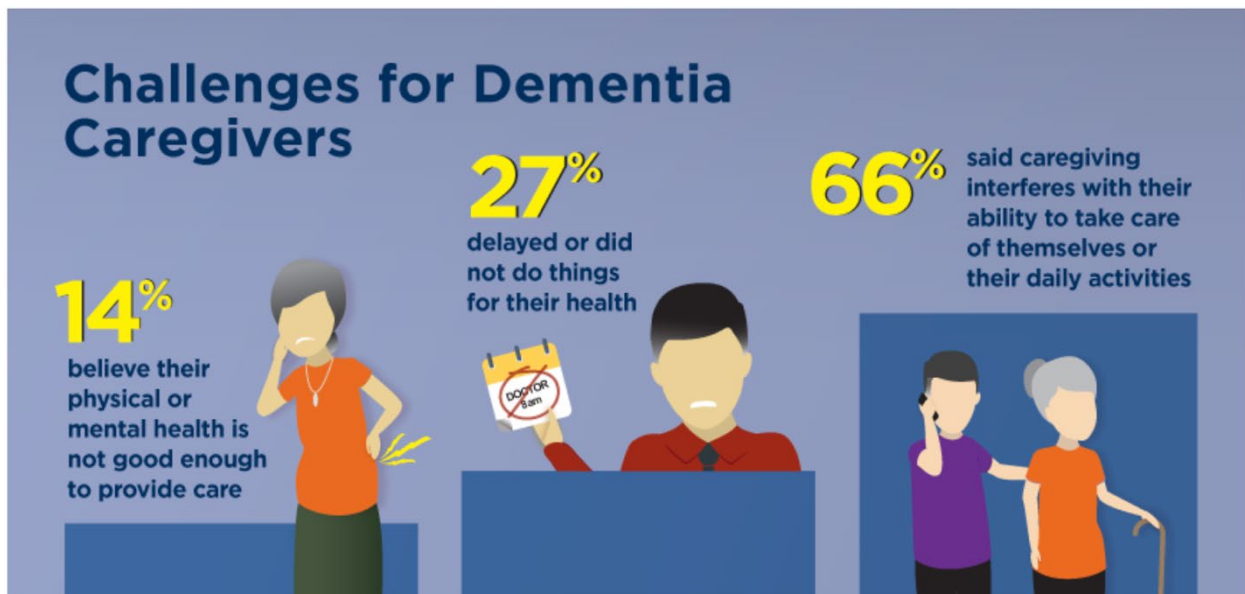


Learn: What is caregiver stress?

Stress is the body's reaction to challenges or pressures. Caring for a loved one or care recipient with dementia can be both difficult and overwhelming. Caregiver stress in particular is any stress related to the physical and emotional strain of caregiving.



How can caregiving effect my own health?



Common sources of caregiver stress may stem from frustration about situations out of your control, *including the behavioral symptoms of the person living with dementia.*

Caregivers may be so focused on their loved one or care recipient that they can't see how caregiving affects them. Some signs of stress are:

- Feeling burdened or worrying all the time
- Feeling tired often
- Sleeping too much or not enough
- Gaining or losing weight
- Becoming easily frustrated or angry
- Losing interest in activities
- Having frequent headaches or other pains or health problems
- Misusing alcohol or drugs, including prescription medicines
- Missing your own medical appointment



Discuss: What aspects of caregiving do you find stressful?

Learn: Stress can affect you physically

YOUR BODY UNDER PRESSURE

BRAIN: When you feel stressed, the brain sends a signal to the adrenal glands (located above the kidneys). The signal triggers the glands to release stress hormones. These chemicals cause changes to the body to prepare it to fight or run away (the “flight” response).

HEART: Heart rate and blood pressure increase so that blood travels through the body faster. This helps deliver oxygen to make muscles work.

LIVER: The liver releases glucose (sugar) into the bloodstream. This powers cells in the body.

LUNGS: Breathing rate increases to deliver more oxygen to muscles and tissues.

STOMACH/INTESTINES: Digestion decreases so that the energy needed to break down food can be redirected to other parts of the body.

SWEAT GLANDS: Stress can trigger sweat to be released from some parts of your body. Stress-sweat is different from sweat caused by being hot.

MUSCLES: Muscles tense up throughout the body to prepare for responding with action.

A message from Scholastic and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

From Scholastic and the scientists of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Image taken from: National Institute on Drug Abuse ([NIDA_YR19_INS3_DownloadAll.pdf\(nih.gov\)](#))

Discuss: What physical stressors do you experience?

Tips to reduce caregiver stress

Learn about dementia

Knowing as much as you can about dementia and care strategies will prepare you for the dementia journey. Understanding how dementia affects the person will also help you adapt to the changes.

Be realistic about dementia and about yourself

It is important, though difficult, to be realistic about dementia and how it will affect the person over time. Once you are realistic, it will be easier for you to adjust your expectations. Also, be realistic about how much you can do. What do you value most? A walk with the person you are caring for, time by yourself, or a tidy house?



Share information with others

Sharing information about dementia with family and friends will help them understand what is happening and prepare them to provide the help and support you need.



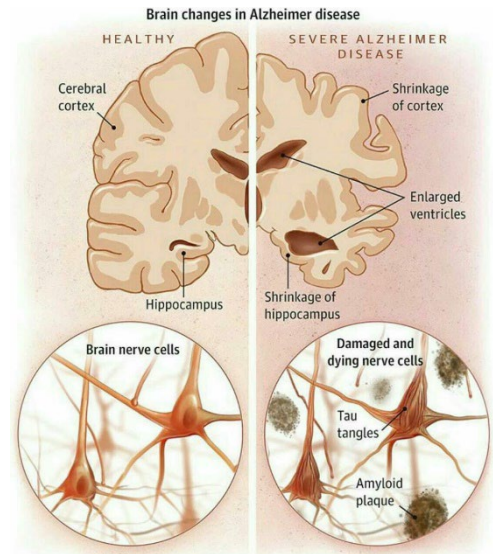
Take care of yourself

Take time for yourself, keep up with your hobbies, try light stretching in the morning, incorporate daily walks or exercise in your day, take hot showers or a bath, and make sure you make it to your doctor appointments.

Dementia Is A Disease Of The Brain

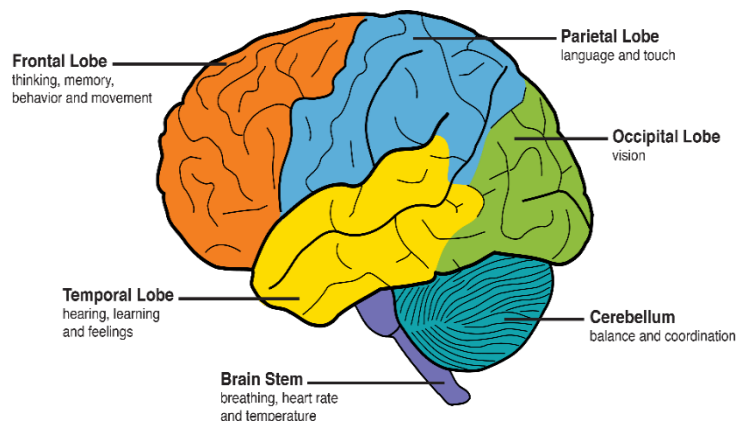
Dementia is a progressive brain disease where nerve cells become damaged and die. It usually starts in the hippocampus, which is the area of the brain in charge of memories.

As the disease progresses, it affects many parts of the brain, not just parts involved in memory, but also language, movement, and behavior.



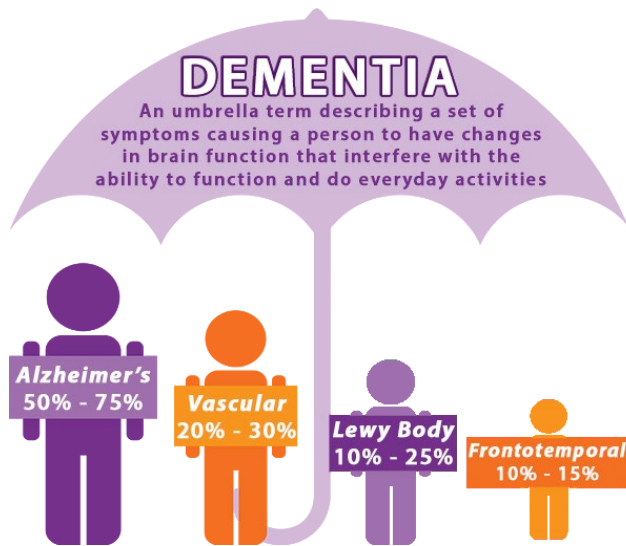
Persons living with dementia often have different behavioral symptoms, depending on the type and stage of their particular dementia. The kind of symptoms a person has depends on which part of the brain is affected by the disease process.

How the brain is affected and the symptoms someone has usually changes as the disease progresses to involve different parts of the brain.



Graphic from [Alzheimer Disease | Dementia and Cognitive Impairment JAMA Network](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/22471) found at <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/22471>

Dementia Types and Their Effects on Different Parts of the Brain



Different types of dementia tend to affect certain parts of the brain.

The part of the brain that forms new memories is usually affected early on in Alzheimer's Dementia. Short-term memory loss is often one of the first symptoms of AD.

Graphic taken from: <https://www.alztennessee.org/info/related-dementias/dementia-the-basics>

In Lewy Body Dementia, visual hallucinations and sleep changes may be more prominent at the beginning.

In vascular dementia, early common features include problems with planning or organizing, solving problems or following a series of steps (such as following a recipe).

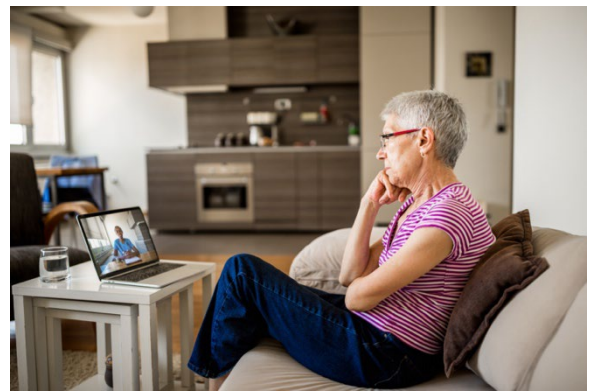
Common symptoms in dementia include difficulties with communication, planning and organization, navigation, personality changes, depression, anxiety, delusions and hallucinations—often because the parts of the brain that help these tasks are affected.

Changes in the brain can also cause behavioral changes that can be stressful for caregivers.

Learning about how the brain changes in dementia can help decrease the stress and confusion that may come from seeing your loved one or care recipient have difficulty with daily tasks or have behavior changes.

People with dementia also experience stress.

A person can function with a low level of stress, but as stress increases, persons living with dementia are likely to become anxious.



Dementia will result in the person having a “progressively lowered stress threshold”. This means that the level of stress the person can tolerate decreases over time, so that they may become stressed more quickly with lower levels of stress.

If their ‘stress threshold’ is reached, things will become overwhelming and they may have behavioral symptoms. When someone with dementia is experiencing stress, it will typically manifest through some sort of outward behavior, such as:

- Pacing, restlessness or physical hiding
- Refusing to eat or drink
- Mood swings or aggression

Identifying the underlying source of stress in a person with dementia can be difficult because they may have difficulty expressing how they are feeling or what is troubling them.

Discuss: What have you noticed are stressors in the person you are caring for with dementia?

Sum things up:

Today, we reviewed what caregiver stress is and what it can look like when caring for someone with dementia. We also briefly touched on tips to reduce your stress.



What are some of your takeaways from today's session?



You are never alone.

**Take the short way back home,
Back to yourself,
And seed those words
Deep down into your heart,
*You are never alone.***

**Look up to the sky,
There are millions of stars
Spreading hope
Every night.
Look up to the sky,
*You are never alone.***

- Alexandra Vasiliu

SESSION 2

Sleep Hygiene for Caregivers of Persons with Dementia



In this session we will:

1. **Check-in**
2. **Review** the home practice assignment from last week
3. **Learn** about the importance of maintaining a healthy sleep routine for both you and your loved one
4. **Discuss** good sleeping habits
5. **Sum things up**



Check-in:

Last week we talked about stress and asked you to observe ways stress affects you. What was helpful in the last session?

Review home practice:

Any reflections you would like to share from your journaling?



Learn: Sleep and Caregiving



Caregivers often find themselves exhausted at the end of the day, but many are still not able to sleep. Part of this exhaustion is due to managing the challenging behaviors of the person they are caring for with dementia.

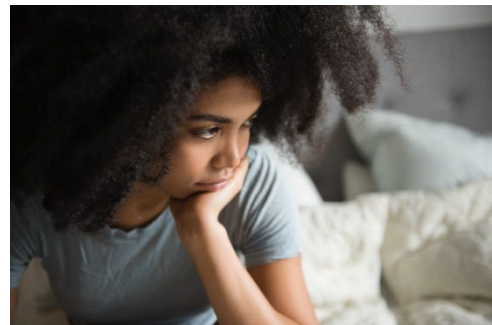
Understanding Sleep Disturbances

Sleep disturbance describes any experiences of changes in your typical sleep. Sleep disturbance often manifests as the following:

- Trouble falling asleep
- Trouble with sleeping through the night
- Waking up much earlier than you usually do
- Feeling unrested throughout the day

Factors that Contribute to Sleep Disturbance


- Worrying/stress
- Changes in environment
- Burn out
- Care recipient needs
- Medical conditions such as obstructive sleep apnea
- **Your care recipient waking you up during the night**



Though you may feel like what's happening with your loved one or care recipient is more important, lack of sleep can eventually catch up with you and impact *your* wellbeing.

Sleep plays an important role in our ability to cope with daily stress, perform daily activities, and to provide care.

Caregivers can more easily navigate the stress of life when they obtain an adequate amount of sleep per night.







The infographic is divided into two main sections. The left section has a dark blue background and features the text: "Do you know the difference between... sleep needed to feel awake and sleep needed to be healthy?" Below the text is an illustration of a person sleeping in a bed at night. The right section has a light blue background and contains text explaining the importance of sleep and listing four key factors for good sleep. Each factor is accompanied by a circular icon: a person sleeping, a bed, an alarm clock, and a sun.

Do you know the difference between...
sleep needed to feel awake and sleep needed to be healthy?

Sleep is important for good health. Studies show that not getting enough sleep or getting poor quality sleep on a regular basis increases the risk of having high blood pressure, heart disease, and other medical conditions.

It's possible to get just enough sleep to stay awake and alert during the day. Research from the National Institutes of Health shows that four key sleep factors are crucial to protect your health:

-  **Good quality, uninterrupted sleep**
-  **7-8 hours of sleep each night (adults)**
-  **Regular bedtime and wake-up time every day**
-  **Exposure to sunlight during the day**



For more information, visit www.nhlbi.nih.gov/sleep.

What does the research say?

According to the National Sleep Foundation, **most adults need between seven and nine hours of sleep each night** for optimum performance, health, and safety.



- Varying studies have documented that approximately 70% of caregivers for people with dementia report sleep problems, 60% report sleeping less than 7 hours, and 10-20% use alcohol and/or sleep medication to go to sleep.
- In another study, 40% of caregivers said they are awakened during the night by the care recipient. These same caregivers also scored higher on the depression screening.

A rule of thumb is that you need a good night's sleep every third night to prevent burn-out.



Discuss: How is your sleep? How is it affected by your caregiving?

People with dementia often have problems with sleeping or may experience changes in their sleep schedule.

Scientists do not completely understand why these sleep disturbances occur. As with changes in memory and behavior, sleep changes are common among persons living with dementia.

Experts estimate that in late stages of Alzheimer's, individuals spend about 40 percent of their time in bed at night awake and a significant part of their daytime sleeping.



Sleep changes may include:

Difficulty sleeping.

Many people with Alzheimer's wake up more often and stay awake longer during the night. Brain wave studies show decreases in both dreaming and non-dreaming sleep stages. Those who cannot sleep may wander, be unable to lie still, or yell or call out, disrupting the sleep of their caregivers.

Daytime napping or shifts in the sleep-wake cycle.

Individuals may feel very drowsy during the day and then be unable to sleep at night.



“Sundowning”

The most common sleep disturbances for people with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias is **“sundowning,”** so called because the person gets agitated later in the day and often has trouble falling asleep and/or staying asleep once in bed.



This can lead to a lack of sleep in caregivers and is one of the most common reasons for a caregiver to place a care recipient in a facility.

Lack of sleep also makes people irritable and impatient, which makes caregiving even harder. It is important to talk with your loved one’s physician about sleep disturbances.

This is as important for your loved one as it is for you and your health.

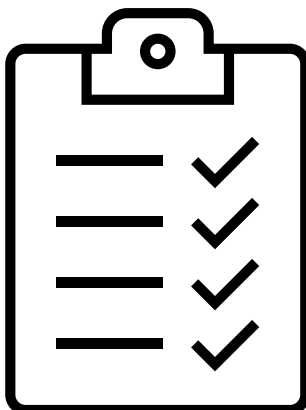
Discuss: How is your care recipient sleep? What challenging sleep issues have come up?

Ways to improve sleep for you and your care recipient*

- Treat any pain
- Stick to a schedule: Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day
- Seek morning sunlight exposure
 - Try to get at least 30 minutes of sunlight per day
- Encourage regular daily exercise
- Don't take naps after 3 PM
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine and nicotine
- Make sure the bedroom temperature is comfortable
- Provide nightlights and security objects
- Turn off the TV or other screens 30 minutes before bedtime; listen to music, podcasts, or sleep stories before bed
- If the person awakens, discourage staying in bed while awake; use the bed only for sleep



You might consider:



- Respite help at night
- Structure the day with activities to minimize napping
- sleeping medications

*Taken from: <https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/treatments/for-sleep-changes>

Sum things up: What are some of your takeaways from today's session?

Home Practice:

Spend ~5-10 minutes per day journaling about sleep habits.

How can you improve your sleep quality? What did you learn about sleep that you can incorporate into your life?





BEDTIME WISHES

WHEN I GO TO SLEEP AT NIGHT
BATHED IN STARS AND PALEST LIGHT
I KNOW AN ANGEL GUARDS MY ROOM;
YOU MIGHT KNOW HIM AS THE MOON.
WITHOUT FAIL, AS SUN DOES SET
MY DREAMS AND I ARE GENTLY MET
TO BE LOOKED OVER ALL THE WAY
UNTIL WE MEET EACH BRIGHT NEW DAY.

- MS MOEM

SESSION 3

Physical Activity for Caregivers of Persons with Dementia



In this session we will:

1. **Check-in**
2. **Review** the home practice assignment from last week
3. **Learn** about ways to stay physically active as a caregiver
4. **Discuss** ways to incorporate exercise into caregiving as a way of reducing stress related to behavioral challenges of our care recipient
5. **Sum things up**

Check-in: How is everyone doing today?

Review home practice: What did you learn about your sleep patterns this week? Did anything change?

Learn: Today, we will be talking about physical activity as a way to reduce stress related to the daily challenges we face from the behavioral symptoms of our care recipient.

As Little as 10 Minutes of Activity Can...



Physical Exercise: Caregivers get Active!

As a caregiver of someone living with dementia, finding time for yourself may be difficult. However, keeping yourself active is essential to staying healthy.



Some of the benefits of being active include:

- Boosts in mood
- Reduction in feelings of stress
- Increase in energy
- Maintenance or improvement in physical strength

Discuss: What kind of physical activity are you able to do for yourself? What are the barriers to physical activity due to your caregiving roles?

These are some ways to keep yourself moving throughout the day:

- Carve out time for an early morning workout
 - Early mornings may give you time to get a workout in before your loved one awakes or plan for workouts your care partner can be involved in (e.g., chair yoga or weights).
- Stretch
 - Stretching can help with improving circulation. Take time to stretch even if you are sitting down.

- Walk during TV commercial breaks or other natural breaks in your day (after washing the dishes or engaging in a caregiving activity)
- Try out home exercise routines
- Try to incorporate the stairs (make sure they are not slick and use the railings)



Exercise can reduce stress and behavioral symptoms in your care recipient.

A person with dementia gains the same kind of benefits from regular exercise as anyone else, including improved cardiovascular fitness, strength and endurance.



Exercise can give many health benefits including:

- improved mood
- better sleep
- reduced likelihood of constipation
- reduced risk of falls because of improved strength and balance
- improved behavior, such as reduced rate of wandering, swearing and acting aggressively
- better communication and social skills

Discuss:

What kind of physical activities does your care recipient enjoy?

Types of exercise for people living with dementia:



Walking – this is one of the best all-round exercises, and it’s free. Walking also helps to work off the restless urge to wander that is typical of many persons living with dementia.

Aerobics – you could attend classes together or find low-impact aerobic workout videos online.

Exercise that doesn’t feel like exercise

Exercise is any physical activity that raises the heart rate. Suggestions for activities that don’t feel like structured exercise include:

Dancing – seniors clubs often include dancing parties. If the person with dementia doesn’t know how to dance, simple dances such as square dancing can be learned and enjoyed.



Gardening – raking and mowing the lawn are good forms of exercise for both you and your care recipient. Make sure you are on hand to help if required.

Housework – vacuuming and folding laundry can be helpful. Most people with dementia can continue to perform certain types of housework if they are supervised.

Exercise can be helpful for people with dementia, but it is important that activities are safe. If the person can still talk while exercising, they're in a comfortable aerobic state.

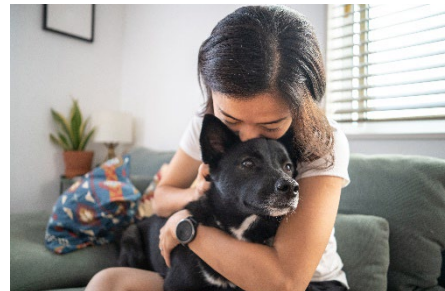


Other enjoyable sensory experiences:

Sometimes, engaging in sensory experiences can reduce stress for you and behavioral symptoms for your care recipient.

Some ideas include:

- enjoying a hand, neck or foot massage
- brushing their hair
- smelling fresh flowers or potpourri
- stroking an animal or differently textured materials
- visiting a herb farm or a flower show
- rummaging in a box containing things that the person has been interested in



Adapted from <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/dementia-activities-and-exercise>

Sum things up:

What are some of your takeaways from today's session?



**TAKE A
SMALL
STEP
EVERYDAY**



SESSION 4

Nutrition Information for Caregivers of Persons with Dementia



In this session we will:

1. **Check-in**
2. **Review home practice** and last week's session
3. **Learn** about the importance of nutrition as a way to reduce stress, including stress from the behavioral symptoms of your care recipient
4. **Discuss** the challenges of healthy eating as a caregiver
5. **Sum things up**

Check-in: How did everyone's week go?

Review home practice: Were you able to create a daily activity plan? What are some of the activities on your list?

Learn: Today, we will be talking about nutrition:



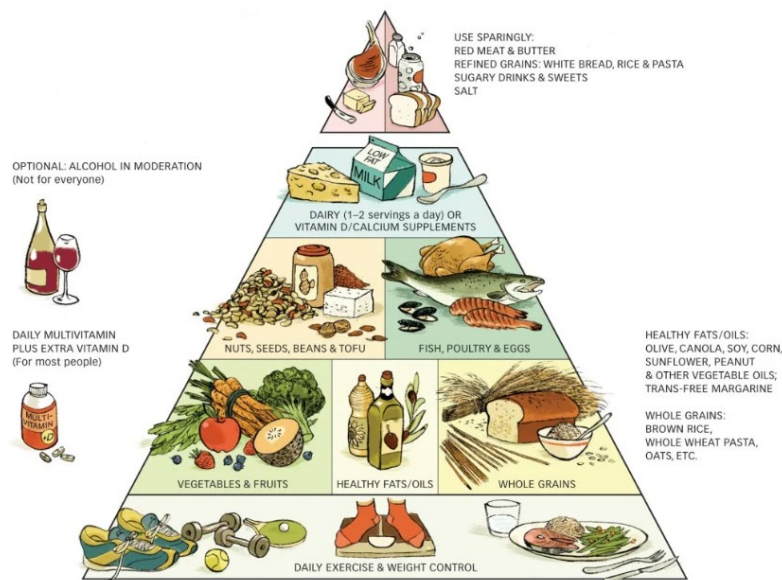
A healthy diet is essential for everyone. It's especially vital when you're caring for others. A nutritious diet can help you feel better, enhance your overall health and quality of life, and lower your health risks.

Maintaining healthy food habits is hard, especially for those caring for someone with dementia. Both your time and energy are limited.

However, it is imperative that you incorporate nutritious foods in your everyday meals to keep your mind and body healthy. As we age, our nutritional demands vary. Our metabolism may slow down and our capacity to absorb certain nutrients may decrease.

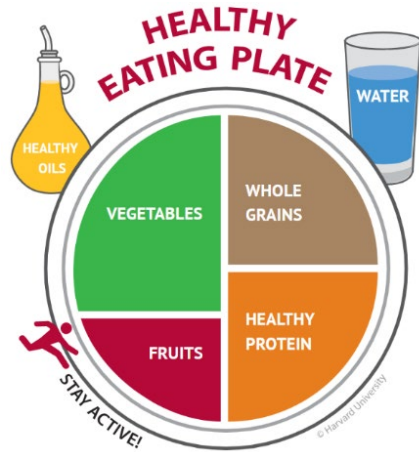
Today, we will talk about how to create healthy meals and create healthy eating habits.

The Healthy Eating Pyramid



Source: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-eating-pyramid/>

Discuss: What are your eating habits? What are the challenges of eating healthfully as a caregiver?



Using the Healthy Eating Plate

It can be hard to imagine how this pyramid translates into real life.

Vegetables (1/2 plate) – Veggies are a great way to add some color to your plate. Additionally, they can provide you with essential nutrients while being low on calories.



Protein (1/4 plate) – Protein plays a very important part in a balanced meal. It also is essential for energy!. Even if you are plant-based you can still get your needed protein through quinoa, lentils, almonds, and more.

Whole Grains (1/4) – Whole grains are rich in fiber and vitamins. They are a great way to fill up your plate and lower blood pressure. Some examples of unprocessed whole grains are wheat, oats, wild rice, brown rice and quinoa.



Fruits – Fruits are full of fiber and are a great source of vitamins. Think about consuming fruits when you’re in the mood for something sweet.



Healthy Oils – We use oil everyday when cooking. Some healthier oil alternatives for canola oil include olive oil, avocado oil, and sunflower oil. These plant-based oils are healthier than butter or animal fat.

Water – Stay hydrated! Water aids the body in absorbing nutrients by breaking down food. When possible, choose water over sugary beverages like juice and soda.

Another way to start is by imagining the foods in the pyramid as a grocery list. Here are a few ideas:

Protein	Veggies	Fruit	Whole Grains	Dairy
Fish	Kale	Berries	Brown rice	Kefir
Chicken	Broccoli	Apples	Oats	Yogurt
Eggs	Ginger	Pineapple	Quinoa	Aged cheese
Greek Yogurt	Carrots	Bananas	Barley	
Nuts	Peppers	Watermelon		

Other Tips

Making major changes to your eating habits can be difficult. Here are some ways to make small substitutions to things you eat daily:

- Use raw veggies as quick snacks instead of chips
- Add lentils or other beans to salads to increase fiber
- Eat your favorite fruit as dessert
- Drink water instead of sugary beverages
- Replace sugary cereals with eggs for breakfast

People with dementia are likely to experience challenges when it comes to eating and meals

Common Causes of Not Eating in Dementia



chewing



visual field



needs assistance



distracted



swallowing



sensory overload



in pain or uncomfortable



on-the-go

DementiaNutrition.com

There are a variety of nutrition problems that can arise when someone has dementia.

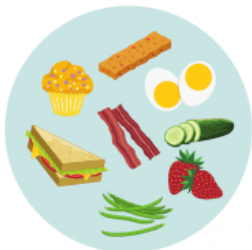
- Changes in food preferences
- Difficulty chewing/swallowing
- Changes in vision or perception
- In pain or uncomfortable
- Distraction or sensory overload
- Loss of ability to use utensils
- Not sitting at table
- Requires assistance or cues

What are your care recipient's food habits? Do people struggle with challenging behaviors around food?

Finger food can allow independence and increase food intake!

dementia-friendly

FINGER FOOD TIPS



Offer variety & honor likes & dislikes



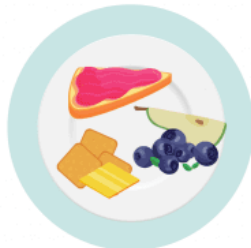
Serve food cool, warm or room temp



Choose foods easy to pick up with ONE hand



Opt for mini versions vs. only full-size cut up



Make it colorful & appetizing



Avoid crumbly, slippery & messy foods



Keep in mind texture prefs & chewing trouble



Pre-load food with dips or sauces



Keep wipes/washcloths handy for dignity

DementiaNutrition.com

Creating Healthy Habits

Make a plan: When time is limited, it's easy to make poor dietary choices or overeat. Forming a meal plan will assist you in better preparing for the week.



Consider your plate: Work to include the correct amounts of veggies, grains, fruits, protein, and dairy in your diet.

Reduce empty calories: Substitute foods and drinks that are high in fat or sugar, and full of empty calories. It's perfectly fine to treat yourself once in a while, but try not to make every meal a treat.



Make eating fun:

Include foods with different colors and finger foods that are also healthy snacks!

Sum things up: What are some of your takeaways from today's session?



**Healthy brain foods, what's the cost?
Those that avoid, their memory is lost.
We need more than nutrients essential,
Our human brains, have so much potential.**

**Assorted berries, a memory boost,
Apples protect us, cancers reduced.
Cherries will fight inflammation,
Dark chocolate boosts, our circulation.**

**Oysters provide us with plenty of zinc,
Aging and healing, there is a link.
Eggs and fish, will build our brains,
All these foods, have countless gains.**



SESSION 5

Healthy Eating for Caregivers of Persons with Dementia



In this session we will:

1. **Check-in**
2. **Review** the home practice assignment from last week
3. **Learn** about ways to incorporate new ways of healthy eating into your everyday life as a caregiver that will help reduce stress associated with caregiving
4. **Discuss** how your diet has changed after becoming a caregiver
5. **Sum things up**

Check-in: How did your week go?

Review home practice: What are some of the foods that you are trying to incorporate more of?



Learn: The MIND Diet

“MIND” stands for “**M**editerranean **I**ntervention for **N**eurodegenerative **D**elay.”

It combines aspects of two very popular diets, the Mediterranean diet and the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, which both are important in improving health for caregivers, potentially reducing some of the ill effects of stress to the body from caregiving.



The **MIND diet** was created to help prevent dementia and slow the decline in brain function that can happen with age.

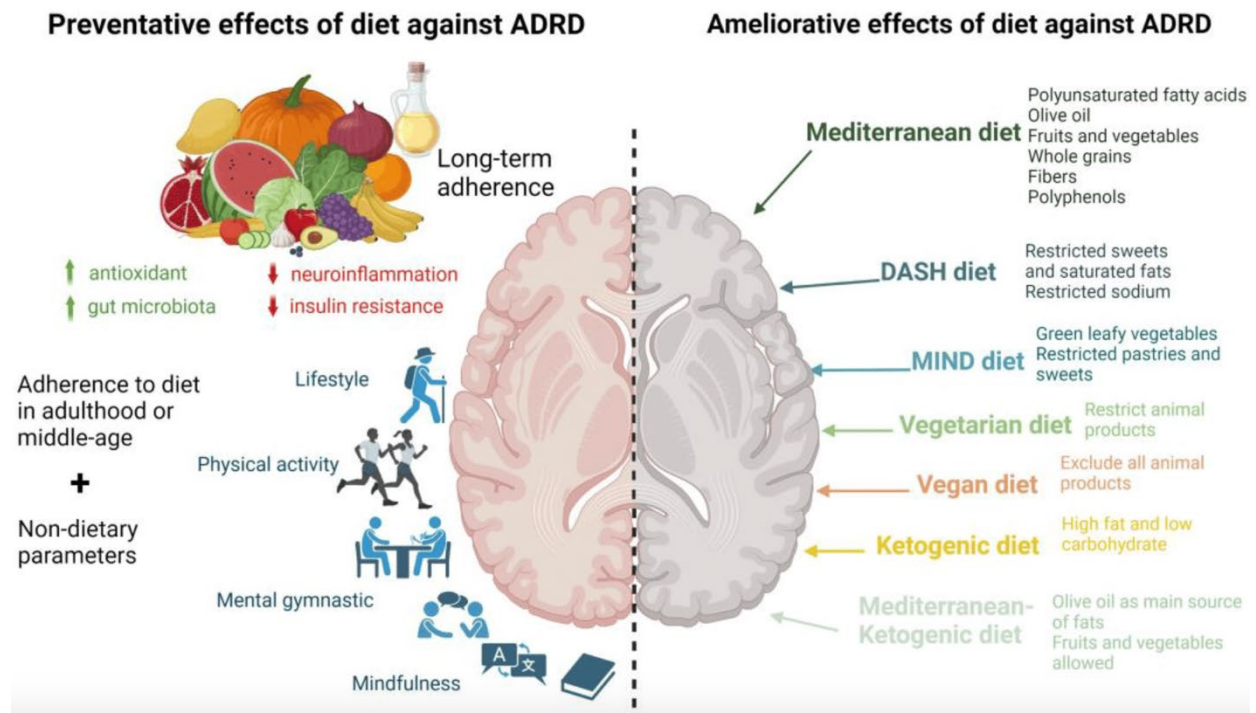
The **Mediterranean diet** is not a restrictive diet, instead it is a **way of eating** based on the traditional cuisine of countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea.



Other elements of the diet include sharing meals with family and friends, getting regular exercise and enjoying wine in moderation if you drink alcohol.

Research shows that closely following the MIND diet is associated with a lower risk of Alzheimer’s disease and slower loss of brain function over time. In one study, researchers examined the association of these diets with brain changes linked with Alzheimer’s.

The brains of participants who had higher diet scores showed fewer signs of Alzheimer’s.



**Agarwal P, et al. [Association of Mediterranean-DASH intervention for neurodegenerative delay and Mediterranean diets with Alzheimer disease pathology](#). *Neurology*. 2023. Epub March 8. doi: 10.1212/wnl.0000000000207176.

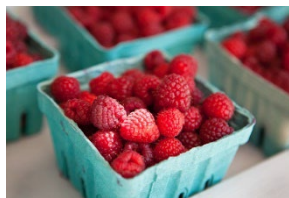
Discuss: Has anyone tried the MIND diet or something like it? What was your experience?

The MIND diet involves eating mostly vegetables, fruits, whole grains and eating a limited amount of red meat, dairy and sugar.

Green, leafy vegetables: (kale, spinach, cooked greens, salads) Six or more servings per week.



Other vegetables: Eat another vegetable at least once per day.



Berries: Eat berries at least twice per week. Berries all have antioxidant benefits.

Nuts: Five or more servings of nuts each week.

Fish: Eat fish at least once per week. Choose fatty (salmon, sardines, trout, mackerel) high in omega-3 fatty acids.



Olive oil: Cook with olive oil.

Beans: Include in four meals per week.



Whole grains: Three servings daily. (oatmeal, quinoa, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, 100% whole wheat bread)

Poultry: Try to eat chicken or turkey at least twice per week.

Wine: Aim for no more than one glass daily. Both red and white wine may benefit your brain.

Note: For persons with dementia, even one glass of wine may be more than their brain can take. Consider non-alcoholic wines and beers.

WHAT'S ON THE MIND DIET?

 AT LEAST **THREE SERVINGS** OF WHOLE GRAINS EACH DAY

AT LEAST ONE DARK GREEN SALAD AND ONE OTHER VEGETABLE EACH DAY



BERRIES AT LEAST TWICE A WEEK

 AT LEAST A ONE-OUNCE SERVING OF NUTS EACH DAY 

 **BEANS OR LEGUMES AT LEAST EVERY OTHER DAY**

POULTRY AT LEAST TWICE A WEEK



 **FISH AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK**

NO MORE THAN ONE TABLESPOON A DAY OF BUTTER OR MARGARINE; CHOOSE OLIVE OIL INSTEAD



CHEESE, FRIED FOOD AND FAST FOOD NO MORE THAN ONCE A WEEK

PASTRIES AND SWEETS LESS THAN FIVE TIMES A WEEK



Image from: Pacific Neuroscience Institute (<https://www.pacificneuroscienceinstitute.org/blog/education/what-is-the-mind-diet/>)

Foods to avoid on the MIND diet

- **Butter and margarine:** Eat less than 1 tablespoon (about 14 grams) daily. Instead, try using olive oil.
- **Cheese:** Eat cheese less than once per week.
- **Red meat:** (beef, pork, lamb) Three servings per week.
- **Fried food:** Limit your consumption to less than once per week.
- **Pastries and sweets:** (Ice cream, cookies, brownies, snack cakes, doughnuts, candy). Try to limit these to four times per week.

Research:

How does the MIND diet help?

Current research has not been able to determine exactly how the MIND diet works. However, scientists think:



The MIND diet may decrease oxidative stress and inflammation

Oxidative stress occurs when unstable molecules called free radicals accumulate in the body in large amounts. This often causes damage to cells with the brain being especially vulnerable.

Inflammation is your body's natural response to injury and infection. But if it's not properly regulated, inflammation can also be harmful and contribute to many chronic diseases.

Together, oxidative stress and inflammation can be quite detrimental to your brain.

The **MIND diet limits foods** that contain saturated fats and trans fats, which may increase beta-amyloid protein levels.

The **MIND diet adds antioxidants** through berries, Omega 3 fatty acids from fish, vitamin E in olive oil, green leafy vegetables and nuts which are thought to protect the brain from oxidative stress.

MIND DIET Sample meal plan



Breakfast: Greek yogurt with raspberries and sliced almonds

Lunch: Mediterranean salad with olive oil-based dressing, grilled chicken, whole wheat pita

Dinner: burrito bowl with brown rice, black beans, vegetables, grilled chicken, salsa, and guacamole

Breakfast: Greek yogurt smoothie with peanut butter and banana

Lunch: baked trout, greens, black-eyed peas

Dinner: whole wheat spaghetti with turkey meatballs and marinara sauce, side salad with olive oil-based dressing



Breakfast: whole wheat toast with almond butter, scrambled eggs

Lunch: grilled chicken sandwich, blackberries, carrots

Dinner: grilled salmon, side salad with olive oil-based dressing, brown rice

You can drink a glass of wine with each dinner to satisfy the MIND diet recommendations, and nuts can make a great snack.

Will eating like this be more expensive?

Some people were concerned that eating this diet is expensive. Researchers did a cost comparison of the Mediterranean diet versus a typical Western diet.



Image Credit: University of South Australia

Now, new research from the University of South Australia shows that the Mediterranean diet is not only good for your health but also for your weekly budget, saving a family of four \$28 per week (or \$1456 per year) compared to the typical Western diet.

Discuss: What might you do to incorporate parts of the MIND or Mediterranean diet into your diet as a caregiver?

Sum things up: Today, we reviewed how to create healthy eating habits as a caregiver. **What are some of your takeaways from today's session?**

Home Practice:

Spend ~5-10 minutes per day journaling about your meals. Reflect on what you had each day or meal planning for the week. What are your thoughts on the MIND diet?



SESSION 6

Putting It All Together



In this session we will:

1. **Check-in**
2. **Review** what we've learned throughout the program to address the stress related to some of the challenges behaviors you face with your care recipient
3. **Learn** about taking care of your physical and mental health
4. **Discuss** learnings and takeaways
5. **Sum things up and Next Steps**

Check-in: How did your week go?



Review: What did you learn from your food journaling/food prepping? Did you try any new meals this week?

Discuss: This is our last session, what parts of this program do you feel was helpful and you can incorporate into your life going forward? What has helped make caregiving more manageable?

Learn: You are important!

Take care of your own mental and physical health.

- **Manage chronic health issues.** Regularly check in with your health care provider.
- **Control high blood pressure.** High blood pressure has harmful effects on the heart, blood vessels, and brain.
- **Manage blood sugar.** Higher than normal levels of blood sugar can lead to diabetes and may increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, and dementia.
- **Treat hearing problems.** Hearing loss may affect cognition and dementia risk in older adults.

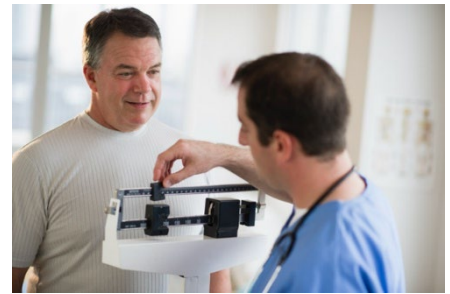


Discuss: Many caregivers prioritize their care recipients medical and health related appointments over their own. Have you delayed or missed any medical appointments or preventative screenings due to caregiving? How do you prioritize your own health?

You deserve to take care of yourself also!

Maintain a healthy weight.

Eat a healthy diet. Eating a balanced, healthy diet decreases risk of health problems.



Keep physically and mentally active.

Physical activity has many health benefits. Mental activity can include reading, playing board games, taking up a new hobby, learning a new skill, working or volunteering, and socializing.



Sleep well. Try to get seven to eight hours of sleep each night








Stay connected with family and friends.

Connecting with people and engaging in social activities can prevent social isolation and loneliness, which are linked to higher risks for cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease.

This content is provided by the National Institute on Aging (NIA), part of the National Institutes of Health found at: <https://www.alzheimers.gov/life-with-dementia/can-i-prevent-dementia>

Discuss: We have learned about ways to care for ourselves and our care recipient. What makes caregiving more manageable for you?

Session	Tips + Resources
<p>Stress</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get help and find support! • Get moving • Find time for yourself <p>https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/caregiver-health/caregiver-stress</p>
<p>Sleep Hygiene</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a routine • Set the mood before you go to bed • Avoid daytime naps <p>https://alzheimer.ca/en/help-support/im-caring-person-living-dementia/providing-day-day-care/sleep</p>
<p>Physical Activity</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take short walks around the neighborhood • Stretch at home or at work • Put on your favorite music and dance <p>https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/daily-living/exercise/early-middle-dementia</p>
<p>Nutrition</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut down on buying sweets and processed foods • Increase your water intake • Create a meal plan before going grocery shopping <p>https://alzheimerscaregivers.org/2023/06/13/caregivers-share-nutrition-healthy-eating-habits/</p>
<p>Healthy Eating</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meal prep at the beginning of the week • Used chopped fruits and veggies as snacks • Create a routine <p>https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/food-eating#:~:text=Offer%20vegetables%2C%20fruits%2C%20whole%20grains,and%20fatty%20cuts%20of%20meats.</p>

CONGRATULATIONS!

*YOU HAVE GRADUATED FROM THE SOCIAL PROGRAM. WE HOPE YOU
HAVE ENJOYED THE PROGRAM AND LEARNED NEW INFORMATION TO
MANAGE STRESS RELATED TO BEING A CAREGIVER OF A LOVED ONE
WITH DEMENTIA.*



RESOURCE GUIDE

The Alzheimer's Association

<https://www.alz.org>

The Alzheimer's Association has a great website with an extensive list of resources, information, and links to other resources.

The National Institute on Aging (NIA)

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/getting-help-alzheimers-caregiving>

NIA, one of the 27 Institutes and Centers of NIH, leads a broad scientific effort to understand the nature of aging and to extend the healthy, active years of life. NIA is the primary Federal agency supporting and conducting Alzheimer's disease research.

Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA)

<https://www.caregiver.org/>

FCA provides services to family caregivers of adults with physical and cognitive impairments, such as Parkinson's, stroke, Alzheimer's and other types of dementia. Their website has lots of information and resources for caregivers.

Dementia Alliance International (DAI)

<https://www.dementiaallianceinternational.org/resources/websites/>

DAI's website has an extensive list of resources for persons with dementia and their caregivers.

Dementia Society of America

<https://www.dementiasociety.org/>

The Dementia Society of America is a Volunteer Health Organization that provides a collection of resources from across the US and around the world.

Dementia Friendly America

<https://www.dfamerica.org/resources>

DFA is a national network of communities, organizations and individuals seeking to ensure that communities across the U.S. are equipped to support people living with dementia and their caregivers.

