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Activities To Do With a Family Member or Friend Who Has Alzheimer's Disease

Older adult with Alzheimer's playing a board game with a friend.

It's important to spend meaningful time with a family member or friend who has Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. Participating together in activities your loved one enjoys can help improve their quality of life and manage behavior changes that may come with the disease, such as sleep problems, aggression, and agitation. It can also help grow and strengthen your connection. However, it may be difficult to know what activities you can safely do with your loved one.

Explore examples below. You may need to modify these activities based on the person's preferences and abilities.

Activities to do around the house

- Make a memory book — look through old pictures together and create a scrapbook.
- Water house and garden plants.
- Listen to their favorite music.
- Watch their favorite show or movie.
- Do an arts and craft project such as painting or drawing.
- Knit or crochet together.
- Cuddle, feed, or brush a household pet.
- Present an instrument the person used to play such as a piano or guitar. Play, whistle, or sing along.
- Sweep or vacuum.

Learn more about [activity planning for people with Alzheimer's](#).

Activities to keep moving

- Go for a walk on a safe path clear of branches or other obstacles.
- Dance to music the person likes or tap your feet.
- Go to the gym — try walking next to each other on the treadmill or using a stationary bike.
- Lift weights or household items such as filled water bottles.
- Plant flowers.
- Stretch or do yoga.
- Go to a local museum.
- Participate in a water aerobics class.

Learn more about [staying physically active with Alzheimer's disease](#).

Activities to engage the mind

- Play a board or card game.
- Work on a puzzle together.
- Read poems or a book together.
- Write cards to other family members and friends.
- Play a computer game.

Learn more about [activities that help keep an active mind](#).

For any activity, remember to be patient

No matter what activity you are engaging in, try to be patient. It may take the person with Alzheimer's or another dementia longer to complete activities. Or they may not be able to accomplish things they used to do. If the person seems agitated, consider whether any activity is needed. Building in quiet times by just sitting together can be rewarding, too.

Tips to keep in mind

- If the person is not enjoying the activity, try something else. You don't need to finish every activity you start.
- Be realistic about how much activity can be done at one time and adjust the pace if needed.
- Make sure the person wants to do the activity and that you are taking it slow.

- Engage in meaningful and productive activities when you can. It can boost the person's mood and help them feel a sense of purpose.
- It's important to help children understand that they can still talk with the person living with Alzheimer's and enjoy activities together, even if the person doesn't always remember them, or asks or repeats a lot of questions.

Activities that promote healthy eating

- Cook together — ask the person about their favorite meal and work together to make it. Or look up healthy cooking videos online and try to make them yourselves.
- Plant vegetables together in the garden or in pots.
- Have a picnic together — bring healthy food options the person likes. Bring a portable or camping chair if the person has trouble sitting on the ground.

Learn more about [healthy eating and Alzheimer's disease](#).

Activities to stay socially engaged

- Join a dementia-friendly exercise class.
- Invite friends over for tea or snacks.
- See if there is a [memory café in your community](#).
- Plan a video call with a group of friends.
- Join a book club together or start your own with friends and family.
- Host a family game night.

Learn more about the importance of [staying socially connected](#) for health and well-being as we age.

Activities to do with children

Older man with Alzheimer's painting a picture with his granddaughter

- Read stories out loud.
- Look through a photo album.
- Paint with watercolors or draw a picture.
- Play with building blocks.
- Listen to music or sing.
- Make tie-dye shirts.

Learn more about [helping children understand Alzheimer's disease](#).

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