

THE Wellness Minute

Exercise Series: 3.1
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Exercise Halts the Dementia Gene

EXERCISE

How Does Exercise Affect the Onset of Dementia?

Dementia is the sixth-leading cause of death in the U.S. today, and experts say the next generation could see twice as many people suffering from it, particularly in old age. But avoiding the brain-deteriorating disease could be as simple as remembering to exercise just a few times a week, according to a new study, which appears to inhibit the expression of the "dementia gene."

Over the course of 18 months, researchers from the University of Maryland measured the brain sizes of elderly participants who were divided into four groups. The activity levels of each of the participants were gauged in conjunction with whether or not they possessed a gene known as APOE-e4, which has been associated with an increased risk of dementia.

Up to 30 percent of the population possesses this gene, and the research team wanted to see whether or not physical exertion affects its expression. What they found is that those with APOE-e4 who exercised at least three times a week experienced a lesser overall decrease in brain mass, a common sign of dementia, compared to those who engaged in little or no exercise.

"We found that physical activity has the potential to preserve the volume of the hippocampus in those with increased risk for Alzheimer's disease, which means



we can possibly delay cognitive decline and the onset of dementia symptoms in these individuals," stated Dr. J. Carson Smith, one of the study's authors. "Physical activity interventions may be especially potent and important for this group."

Exercise alone is hardly the best approach, as nutrition is equally if not more important for preserving brain function, it is vital for maintaining good health, especially in old age. Though it defies the outdated conventional thinking of the past, consuming more saturated fats in the diet will feed your brain the nutrients it needs for proper repair and function. That means getting off the bad advice of the 70's through the 90's and getting off the nutrient deficient low-fat craze. The best saturated fats come from foods like coconut oil, pastured butter, ghee, and pastured animals. "The brain thrives on a fat-rich, low-carbohydrate diet, which unfortunately is relatively uncommon in human populations today," wrote neurologist Dr. David Perlmutter in his best-selling book Grain Brain.