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## **Summer Activities:** *Safe And Effective Ways To Keep Active This Season*

**P**aying extra attention to your health as you grow older is an essential part of aging well. Spending time outdoors is good for all ages, but especially beneficial as you grow older! There are a variety of activities during the summer months that offer seniors the chance to get some exercise and enhance their health and lives.

Making outside activities a priority for your seniors can benefit everyone; and the health and social benefits of staying active are plentiful. Not only does it feel good to get outside, but social engagement has been shown to improve mental and physical well-being and even prolong

your life.

**Fishing Excursion** – Fishing is a relaxing activity that appeals to many older adults. Seniors might enjoy spending time with old friends or perhaps with a grandchild. When going on a fishing trip, seniors have the chance to spend quality time with others. Many seniors venture to local fishing spots during the early morning hours or in the evening when temperatures are not as warm.

**Picnic at a Local Park or Playground** – get back to nature by packing a lunch and eating outdoors. Picnics serve as a great way to get out and soak up some Vitamin D. Fresh air and good

conversation are great for both seniors and caregivers. You can even arrange some picnic games for senior citizens.

**Check Out The Local Mall** – You don't necessarily need to shop, but just by hitting the mall your loved ones can sit, people watch and stroll around checking out what is new. The air-conditioned environment can keep seniors cool while they enjoy window shopping or looking for specific items. and you even enjoy a meal together as well. Walking in a mall enables older adults to spend some time outside of the home, and get some exercise.

**Join A Book Club** – inquire at local churches or check with your local library for an existing program. By just sharing books that each of you have enjoyed can open up some wonderful conversation.

**Visit Museums** – many museums / societies offer summer activities for free. If it's too hot outside, take a trip to a museum or aquarium. Take walk around the cool, air conditioned rooms and enjoy the sites. Jog your memory with history facts you use to know and strange fish you forgot existed. Keep an eye out for senior discounts!

**Adult Classes** – Many community centers and colleges offer classes during the summer. Learning stimulates different regions of the brain, which prevents cognitive impairment. The interaction with other students helps seniors broaden their social circle.

**Take In A Sporting Event** – this can be any local sporting event, even a grandchild's little league game! Many stadiums offer discounts for senior citizens.

**Flea Markets, Farmers Markets, or Craft Shows** – check the community events section in your local newspaper or news broadcasting. Warming temperatures herald a host of markets in pretty much every town. This could include weekly farmers markets, local crafts, as well as seasonal flea markets.

**Outdoor Theater, Concert or Craft Fairs** – Many local organizations will put on small music events or outdoor

theatre showings that your or your loved one may really enjoy! Bring some snacks and a blanket and enjoy the sounds and scenery. Outdoor activities for the elderly can definitely include art. Outdoor crafts shows are filled with fun scenery, lively activities, and great opportunities to see some pretty neat art. You might be able to make some of your own!

**Fruit Picking** – Fruit picking is a great way to get out and get some fresh air while partaking in mild exercise. You and your loved one might be able to benefit from small berry or vegetable farms weekly outdoor events have gained popularity in many communities. Some places offer concerts, while others feature live plays or outdoor movies on a weekly basis. These outdoor events often take place in the evenings when temperatures are cooler.

## Outdoor Activity For Seniors And Caregivers

Going outside in the fresh summer air is a wonderful way for elders and caregivers to spend their time together, and encouraging exercise and socializing are both important parts for a healthy senior lifestyle. There are a handful of great outdoor activities for senior citizens to do that are easy for caregivers to arrange.

**Visit a Local Pool or Lake** – Spending time near a water source is a great way to cool off. Some seniors may enjoy dipping their feet in the lake, while others may want to sign up for a water aerobics class. For those who don't want swim, taking a boat ride or simply sitting somewhere with a scenic water view can be refreshing.

**Gardening** – Gardening is one of the most popular outdoor activities for seniors. This is a great way for seniors to stay active and maintain strength and flexibility. This light aerobic activity is very beneficial and be incorporated easily into a daily routine. Plant vegetables or flowers in raised flowerbeds or pots. Adapt or purchase tools that will make working in the garden easier. Even seniors with limited mobility may be able

to participate at some level, especially with assistance.

**Walks** – A great way to stay active is through walks. Whether it be long hikes or a quick jaunt around the neighborhood, walking helps to maintain cardio in a senior’s lifestyle. It’s also a great way to get some fresh air and see the sights the environment around you has to offer. Going for a walk an outing by choosing different routes each day or driving to a scenic location to soak in the sights. Seniors will not only benefit from the sun, but also from the leisurely, healthy movement.

**Bird Watching** – Birdwatching can

really be beneficial in calming the mind and allowing for reflection. This is a great activity for seniors who wish to enjoy and connect with nature, as well as being very soothing and therapeutic. Whether relaxing in a nearby park or traveling to a wildlife refuge, bird-watching is fun and calming.

**Photography** – Taking photos is an easy and enjoyable activity for all ages. Photography can be enjoyed in the moment as well as later on. So grab a digital camera and go capture some memories!

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## Activities For Seniors With Dementia

**T**here are particular activities that are better suited to seniors living with dementia. Seniors with neurological illnesses are likely to benefit from specific types of activities (such as the ones listed on the Alzheimer’s site under senior activities.)

Here are some simple activities that caregivers and family members can do

with their loved ones:

### 1. Exercise

If your senior loved one is living with dementia, you may want to begin their day with simple physical exercise. Depending on their condition this could be as simple as a chair exercises or a short walk. Things such as simple chair

exercises simply have the senior be seated in front of you and show them the exercise to perform so that they can mimic your movements. There are many chair exercises that you can do: our favorite chair exercise is the one where you sit down and play some music.

**Keeping seniors active and their mind stimulated can have a positive impact on their overall health and wellness. Whatever you choose to do, the main goal is staying happy and healthy.**

about their musical preference before starting, and you can listen and sing along together. It is important to note that the sounds of nature that can be confusing and cause discomfort in elderly citizens, instead choose music with

lyrics from the seniors' own youth.

**2. Play Music/Sing Together**

Music has an amazing ability to relax and engage seniors living with dementia, and can trigger positive responses in them. Make sure to always ask the senior

**3. Kitchen Activity**

Mixing, pouring or measuring ingredients together in the kitchen are very good neural activities that help physically too. Helping in the kitchen with simple tasks



**Food for Thought: How to Feed our Brains Better**

*By Barton Seaver*

The human brain is an incredibly sophisticated organ. It has around 100 billion neurons that send nerve impulses at speeds of around 250 miles per hour. But like any other part of the human body, the brain needs essential raw materials to function properly. Composed of about 73 percent water

and weighing about three pounds, the brain is just two percent of the average person's body weight but uses 20 percent of our calorie intake. Keeping our brains fueled and healthy is crucial.

**Whole Grains**

The brain needs energy to work, and

is one of the most effective activities for individuals with early or middle stage Alzheimer's disease. These simple activities spark memories and can help foster conversations.

#### 4. Folding Clothes/Sorting

In patients with more advanced forms of dementia, activities like folding clothes or sorting them can be relaxing and will keep your loved one engaged. Even smelling food aromas and going through old pleasant pictures of joyful moments can help boost morale and brain activity but also spark conversations.

As you can see, regular activity and socialization can help seniors improve physical and mental well-being. It is good to note to be sure to keep summer safety

in mind. Summer can bring extreme heat that will increase the risk of dehydration, heat stroke, and other health risks, so be sure to practice safety first.

Keeping seniors active and their mind stimulated can have a positive impact on their overall health and wellness. Whatever you choose to do, the main goal is staying happy and healthy. Don't stay indoors the whole summer — seniors should take advantage of the beautiful summer weather and have fun trying something new.

Older adults may need help with several activities, and some seniors need occasional assistance at home.

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its main source of energy is glucose. This simple sugar, found in many foods, is carried in the bloodstream and converted into energy by tissue cells throughout the body. Unlike the rest of the body, however, the brain cannot store this energy, so it needs a constant and steady supply of glucose. Whole grains are complex carbohydrates, which means they release their glucose into the bloodstream slowly, helping us stay alert and focused through the day. Whole grains are also rich in B vitamins that perform a number of beneficial functions for the brain.

#### B Vitamins

Collectively, the eight water-soluble organic compounds known as B vitamins take important steps to keep our brains healthy. B6, B12, and B9 reduce the levels of homocysteine, an amino acid that can damage the lining of the arteries and may increase risk of heart attack or stroke. B1, B2, and B5 all play a critical role in the metabolic processes that turn food into energy to power the brain, while B12 also promotes the development of red blood cells that carry oxygen to the brain. A number of B vitamins, including folic acid, are vital for producing

the neurotransmitters that relay signals between neurons, a reduction of which can affect our cognitive ability, causing fatigue, depression, anxiety, aches, and pains.

#### Berries

Our brains begin to lose some cognitive function before we turn 30, but berries, especially dark berries like blackberries, blueberries, and cherries, can potentially slow this natural aging process. The problem is oxidative stress, where the body becomes increasingly inefficient at removing the harmful by-product of metabolism called free radicals. These destabilize our body's cells by stealing electrons from cells in the brain and elsewhere, causing considerable damage. Berries are packed with antioxidant molecules called flavonoids that protect cells from damage by sacrificing their own electrons to free radicals. This could delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

#### Oily Fish

Oily fish contain many nutrients needed by the brain, including omega-3 fatty acids. The body can't produce

omega-3, so it's likely that eating foods packed with omega-3 will benefit the brain over time. Fish such as salmon and sardines contain two of the main omega-3s, known as EPA and DHA. These are involved in many brain processes, including gene expression reducing oxidative stress, helping blood flow around the brain, producing new neurons, and maintaining the level of neurotransmitters. Some studies suggest that an omega-3 rich diet could significantly reduce the risk of dementia and

Alzheimer's disease.

### **Broccoli and Leafy Greens**

Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli are also important for enhancing your cognitive function. Research suggests that this could be because broccoli is rich in a sulfur-containing compound called glucosinolate that slows the breakdown of acetylcholine, an important neurotransmitter. Acetylcholine is needed by the central nervous system and plays a significant role in memory and learn-



## **6 Healthy & Delicious Salads Older Adults Should Try**

*By Susan Bruketta*

**W**hen made with the right ingredients, salads are an easy and complete meal for seniors to enjoy. They provide a wealth of vital nutrients and are ideal year-round. Here are six different salad recipes older adults can try.

### **1. Salmon Salad**

Combine French-cut green beans, flaked salmon, chopped cucumber, corn kernels, black olives, and sliced radishes with dark, leafy greens. Make a quick

dressing using olive oil, a dash of salt and pepper along with Dijon mustard, parsley, and white wine vinegar. Each serving provides 25 percent of an aging adult's recommended amount of daily protein along with 84 milligrams of calcium plus iron, fiber, and healthy fats. The salmon also serves as a rich source of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids.

### **2. Greek Salad**

This dish features several common in-

ing—studies show that people suffering from Alzheimer’s disease have abnormally low levels of acetylcholine. A recent report suggests that a daily serving of leafy greens, such as spinach, or broccoli, could keep our brains around 11 years younger.

### **Water**

Although water isn’t usually considered a food, it is absolutely crucial to brain health. Water is a major source of nutrients for our thirsty brains, is essen-

tial for removing toxins, and provides cushioning and lubrication for brain tissues. Every chemical reaction in the brain requires water, especially energy production, so dehydration quickly impairs brain function. Even a small reduction in hydration can cause confusion, fatigue, and dizziness. And it is real water we need, not tea, coffee, soda, or even purified or fizzy water. All of those have been stripped of the precious nutrients and natural electrolytes that water has and the brain needs.

gredients used in Mediterranean cuisine, which promotes cardiovascular health. Simply combine dark, leafy greens with chopped bell pepper, sliced cucumbers, halved cherry tomatoes, sliced black olives, cannellini beans, and feta cheese. Create the perfect dressing by mixing olive oil with garlic powder, a dash of salt, lemon juice, white wine vinegar, and Dijon mustard. Each serving provides 10 percent protein, 21 percent potassium, 12 percent calcium, and 10 grams of fiber along with antioxidants and vitamins.

### **3. Grilled Chicken Salad**

This meal is a healthier alternative to traditional BBQ dishes. Combine arugula leaves with diced grilled chicken breasts, chopped pecans, and raspberries. Make a dressing using balsamic vinegar, olive oil, Dijon mustard, and minced garlic. Each serving provides nearly 40 percent of the recommended daily amounts of protein along with 97 milligrams of calcium, fiber, and iron. The pecans supply omega-3 fatty acids, and the raspberries contain vitamin C. Garlic has anti-inflammatory and antibiotic properties, and it is known to reduce LDL cholesterol.

### **4. Pesto Pasta Salad**

This quick and easy dish features cooked whole-grain pasta combined with halved cherry tomatoes, cubed, low-fat mozzarella, and basil leaves. Toss with a dressing made from olive oil, lemon rind,

and minced garlic. Sprinkle with Romano cheese if desired. Every serving provides protein, fiber, iron, and 146 milligrams of calcium. The basil and tomatoes are rich in anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, which protect the body from malignant growths.

### **5. Pea and Prosciutto Garden Salad**

This protein-rich meal is great to serve with toasted whole-grain bread. Start by covering a plate with tomato slices. Top with peas, French-cut green beans, edamame, arugula, and crisped pieces of prosciutto. Spritz with an olive oil, white wine vinegar, and tarragon dressing. This salad provides plenty of fiber along with 94 milligrams of calcium, iron, and omega-3 fatty acids.

### **6. Blue Cheese and Pear Salad**

This delightful creamy, crispy, sweet dish is great to eat anytime. On a bed of dark greens, add toasted rye bread cubes, sliced pears, crumbled blue cheese, chopped rosemary, minced garlic, and pecan halves. Make the dressing by combining buttermilk, blue cheese, lemon juice, and Worcestershire sauce. Each serving offers protein, fiber, and 202 milligrams of calcium.

Eating nutritious meals is one of the best ways to remain healthy in the senior years.



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