

Keep Moving, Stay Connected, Live Well with Memory Loss

Abstract

Physical activity and social connection are vital components of healthy aging, but elusive for many older adults. People with dementia and their loved ones may encounter additional challenges to maintaining physical activity or social connection. Social stigma can prevent people with dementia from taking part in social and recreational activities, while a resource like a senior fitness class may not be adapted to fit the needs of people with dementia. Older women are more likely to live with dementia, or to act as family caregivers. Efforts to provide dementia-friendly opportunities for social connection and physical activity are an essential way to address equity for older women. The City of Seattle can be a part of the solution by providing incentives for City-funded senior centers to adapt their health, wellness, and socialization programming to be accessible to people with dementia and their loved ones.

Data

- 77 percent of adults over age 65 in King County do not meet the recommended amount of physical activity. 16.5 percent of Age Friendly Seattle survey respondents have social contact every two to three weeks or less. Age-Friendly Seattle Draft Action Plan 2018–2021, bit.ly/2h7ND4f
- An estimated 110,000 people live with Alzheimer's or other dementias in Washington State, and another 335,000 people provide unpaid care to someone with dementia. Alzheimer's Statistics—Washington, Alzheimer's Association: bit.ly/2lid2wQ
- Nearly two-thirds of people with Alzheimer's disease are women. Fact Sheet, 2017 Alzheimer's Disease Facts & Figures: bit.ly/2yRg8NI
- Nationally, more than 75 percent of family caregivers are women. Caregiver Statistics: Demographics, National Center on Caregiving, Family Caregiver Alliance: www.caregiver.org/caregiver-statistics-demographics
- 39 percent of people with dementia surveyed by the Alzheimer's Society in 2013 reported feeling lonely, prompting a call to address social isolation in people with dementia to improve their quality of life, through programs like memory cafes and walking groups. Dementia 2013: The Hidden Voice of Loneliness: bit.ly/2lgnkgZ
- Social isolation and physical inactivity are two of nine potentially modifiable risk factors for dementia recently identified by the Lancet Commissions. bit.ly/2yQ6z1f

City Role

The City of Seattle promotes physical activity and social connection for older women in a variety of ways, from Aging and Disability Services' referrals to wellness programs to Seattle Parks and Recreation's Sound Steps walking program and culturally-tailored Food & Fitness programs. As for opportunities

particularly adapted to older women living with dementia and/or female caregivers, Seattle Parks and Recreation and some City-funded senior centers meet this need:

- In 2014, Seattle Parks launched Dementia-Friendly Recreation, the first municipal program in the nation specifically designed to provide meaningful recreation opportunities for people living with dementia and their loved ones. Programs like the Out & About Walking Group, Minds in Motion fitness class, and Friendly Folk Dance provide physical activity, while field trips, arts programs and more provide the opportunity to connect socially. www.seattle.gov/parks/find/dementia-friendly-recreation
- Some City-funded senior centers provide physical activity and social support programs designed for people with dementia. For example, the Greenwood Senior Center launched the second Alzheimer's Café in the nation—regular monthly social gatherings in a neighborhood venue for people with dementia and their loved ones. They also provide yoga classes, a memory loss chorus, and a weekly enrichment group for people with early stage memory loss. www.phinneycenter.org/gsc/memory/
- These City-supported programs partner with other organizations under the banner of Momentia Seattle, a grassroots movement empowering people with memory loss and their loved ones to stay active and connected in the community. www.momentiasseattle.org

Recommended Pre-reading

- Greenwood, N, Smith, R, Akhtar, F, Richardson, A. 2017. A qualitative study of carers' experiences of dementia cafés: a place to feel supported and be yourself. Greenwood et al. BMC Geriatrics. 17:164: bit.ly/2zEh8Sj
- Teri, L, Logsdon, R, McCurry, S. 2008. Exercise Interventions for Dementia and Cognitive Impairment: The Seattle Protocols. bit.ly/2yPt72c

Presenter



Marigrace Becker, MSW
Program Manager for Community Education & Impact, UW
Memory & Brain Wellness Center
Phone: 206-744-2017
E-mail: mbecker1@uw.edu
Web: www.depts.washington.edu/mbwc