

Alzheimer's
Care Group



Frequent Brain Stimulation In Old Age Reduces Risk Of Alzheimer's Disease

How often old people **read a newspaper, play chess, or engage in other mentally stimulating activities** is related to risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, according to a study published, in the online edition of *Neurology*[®], the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

For the study, more than 700 people in Chicago, IL, with an average age of 80 underwent yearly cognitive testing for up to five years. Participants were part of the Rush Memory and Aging Project, a longitudinal study of more than 1,200 older people. Of the participants, 90 developed Alzheimer's disease. Researchers also performed a brain autopsy on the 102 participants who died.

The study found a cognitively **active person in old age was 2.6 times less likely to develop dementia** and Alzheimer's disease than a cognitively inactive person in old age. This association remained after controlling for past cognitive activity, lifetime socioeconomic status, and current social and physical activity.

Researchers say the findings may be used to help prevent Alzheimer's disease. "Alzheimer's disease is among the most feared consequences of old age," said study author Robert S. Wilson, PhD, with the Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. "The enormous public health problems posed by the disease are expected to increase during the coming decades as the proportion of old people in the United States increases. This underscores the urgent need for strategies to prevent the disease or delay its onset."

Wilson says the study also found frequent cognitive activity during old age, such as **visiting a library or attending a play**, was associated with reduced risk of mild cognitive impairment, a transitional stage between normal aging and dementia, and less rapid decline in cognitive function.

The study was supported by grants from the National Institute on Aging and the Illinois Department of Public Health.

The American Academy of Neurology, an association of more than 20,000 neurologists and neuroscience professionals, is dedicated to improving patient care through education and research. A neurologist is a doctor with specialized training in diagnosing, treating and managing disorders of the brain and nervous system such as stroke, Alzheimer's disease, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, and multiple sclerosis.

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