

Alzheimer's Therapies Unproven, but Patient Respect Goes a Long Way

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Therapies to prevent or slow Alzheimer's disease - including mental stimulation, exercise, and dietary supplements - have not been demonstrated to work, according to an independent panel of the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

"We wish we could tell people that taking a pill or doing a puzzle every day would prevent this terrible disease," panel chair Dr. Martha Daviglus of Northwestern University in Chicago said, "but current evidence doesn't support this."

While the cause of the disease is not known, certain [risk factors](#) have been associated with a higher risk, such as diabetes, depression, smoking, and certain [genetic markers](#).

Despite the uncertainty, the Health Care Council of Illinois recommends a few ways to connect with people who have Alzheimer's:

- Use short, simple sentences.
- Be patient. It may take up to 45 seconds for someone with Alzheimer's to process information and respond.
- Ask specific rather than open-ended questions. Instead of, "What do you want for lunch?" try "Would you like chicken or beef?"
- Minimize distractions. Turn off the TV or radio when the person has to

concentrate.

- Don't quiz with questions like "Who am I?" or "What day is this?" and don't constantly remind them of unpleasant memories such as a spouse's death. This may only cause frustration and [anxiety](#).
- Follow old, reassuring routines.
- Be respectful. Even people with [dementia](#) can tell when they're talked down to.
- Plan activities that spark reminiscence. Use favorite subjects like sports or cooking.

Provided by Northwestern University

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