

AAIC: exercise can treat signs and symptoms of dementia

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(HealthDay)—Regular exercise may be the best medicine for seniors facing the onset of dementia, according to three new clinical trials. The research was scheduled for presentation Thursday at the annual Alzheimer's Association International Conference, held from July 18 to 23 in Washington, D.C.

One study indicated that intense aerobic exercise improves [blood flow](#) to key areas of the brain, and appears to reduce the tau protein tangles that are a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease. "Blood flow decreases in those areas for all of us with age, and yet exercise increased it," lead author

Laura Baker, Ph.D., a cognitive neuroscientist at Wake Forest School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, N.C., told *HealthDay*. "It seems to me we're changing aging-related effects, and we may be changing Alzheimer's-related effects, both with exercise."

In another clinical trial, 200 people between ages 50 and 90 with Alzheimer's were randomly assigned to either an [aerobic exercise](#) program or a control group that performed no extra exercise. The individuals who exercised were asked to reach a target intensity of 70 to 80 percent of their maximum heart rate. The researchers found that those who exercised suffered from fewer mood problems such as anxiety, irritability, and depression. The people who exercised most often and most vigorously also achieved significant improvements in mental speed and attention.

The third clinical trial took place in Canada and involved 71 people between ages 56 and 96 who had suffered transient ischemic attacks, resulting in [mild cognitive impairment](#). Half were assigned to a group that took part in regular aerobics classes. The researchers found that participants who took aerobics significantly improved their memory and selective attention, compared with those not asked to exercise regularly.

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