

[IMAGE]

Stay Active, Stay Young

Many elderly people continue to enjoy a variety of leisure activities as they age, from playing board games to taking long walks outside. Leisure activities offer a chance to socialize, exercise, and learn new games and hobbies. A recent study has shown that these types of activities may offer more than daily enjoyment.

To determine the link between Alzheimer's disease/dementia and leisure activities, the authors of the study, published in the journal *Neurology*, examined almost 2,000 people (65 years or older), all residing in northern Manhattan, New York. Baseline mental health on neurologic examinations and leisure-activity participation were assessed; the seniors were followed for seven years to determine the onset of Alzheimer's disease or other mental deficiencies. Thirteen leisure activities were considered, including hobbies (e.g., stamp collecting); walking; visiting friends or relatives; reading; going to entertainment events; and playing games.

Risk for Alzheimer's or other dementias was decreased by about 40% in those with high leisure-activity levels compared to those with low activity levels. Also, Caucasians were 50% less likely than African-Americans to develop dementia.

Continual learning and mental stimulation, as well as physical activity and social interaction, help prevent deterioration of the brain. Besides being fun, they can help prevent a variety of mental and physical ailments.

Reference:

Scarmeas N, Levy G, Tang MX, et al. Influence of leisure activity on the incidence of Alzheimer's disease. *Neurology* 2001;57, pp. 2236-2242.

For more information on senior health, go to <http://www.chiroweb.com/tyh/senior.html>

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