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Health and Wellness

We hear that what's good for the heart is good for the brain, so we are encouraged to eat well – or better – but I think our health and wellness goes beyond eating. And that's what you are going to read more about in this issue of *Insight*.

I have a dog – a chocolate Labrador – that gets me out walking, which is an activity that is good for us. We get exercise, we get outdoors (hopefully in the sunshine) and we get to smell the roses, which at this time of year are pretty sweet. Who knows, we may see someone along the way and stop and chat.

And that is another positive point for health and wellness: socialization. Not only are getting some exercise and eating well good points, but getting out of our homes and doing things with others is wonderful for those of us with Alzheimer's or a related dementia.

It can be as little as meeting the gang at a support group for some good conversation and no doubt lots of laughs (tales of our latest exploits will do that, won't they? We get to laugh at ourselves for that something-or-other we did). Some members of my support group go to their local community centre or YMCA for exercise sessions or to swim. Again, it's good for your health so it's good for your brain.

A side benefit to all this good stuff is a positive personal feeling. You feel good about yourself and you are then better prepared to take that first step the next morning to start another day. Doesn't that make it all worthwhile?

Jim Mann is the Honorary Editor of Insight. He is an active volunteer who advocates on behalf of and for people with dementia. Diagnosed with Early Onset Dementia in February 2007 at the age of 58, Jim is determined to help make a difference in the lives of people who are affected by the disease.



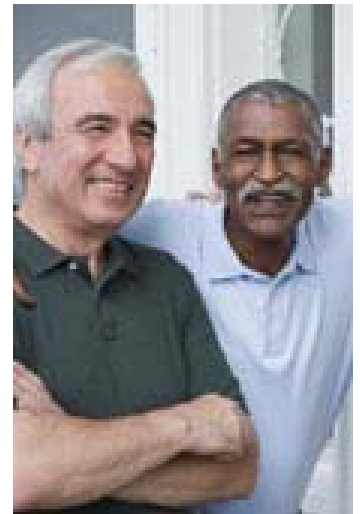
Staying Connected

Social engagement and support help to reduce the impact that stressful life events, such as coping with the diagnosis of dementia, can have on well-being as we age. Know and appreciate how important family and friends are to your overall health and wellness. We can work together with our family and friends by openly communicating our needs and expectations.

Being socially active allows you to have fun and stay involved, provides mental stimulation, maintains language skills, connects you with people with similar interests, and provides companionship and a sense of accomplishment.

Things to consider to enhance social well-being:

- 'Bite the bullet' and push yourself to be socially involved – recognizing your limits and communicating those limits to your family and friends.
- Embrace your moments of 'built-in happiness', share those things with your partners in care so they can bring them up with you when you are feeling down.
- Embrace your personal support network. Your family and friends are so important – identify one person who can be your trusted friend you can vent to when needed.
- Get out and live – go to a movie, the theatre, out for dinner, shopping, or volunteer.
- Do things that allow you to engage with other people, for example, consider joining a bridge club, go bowling, entertain, go to church, join a social group or a sporting team, go dancing, exercise at a gym, or attend an adult day program.



Adapted from: Enhancing wellness An inspirational guide for people like us with early-stage memory loss - A "By Us For Us" Guide. The Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Program.

Thoughts on friendship:

"Don't walk in front of me, I may not follow; don't walk behind me, I may not lead; walk beside me, and just be my friend."

- Albert Camus

"A friend is someone who understands your past, believes in your future, and accepts you just the way you are."

-Unknown

"Friends are those rare people who ask how we are and then wait to hear the answer."

-Ed Cunningham

Meaningful Activities

Everyone has a need to participate in activities – it’s what makes us who we are and is an essential part of our well-being. We asked people with Alzheimer’s, “What is a meaningful activity for you?” Here are some of the replies:

- “I like to try and make people smile. Just smiling at people throughout the day is a meaningful activity for me.”
- “I volunteer at my church with their monthly newsletter – lots of folding and stapling, but they appreciate it and that makes me feel good.”
- “I still go to the gym as much as I can. They have a stretching class for seniors and I also do some weights. Keeps me active and pretty fit!”
- “I like to read to the grandkids. They love it. They are pretty little so their books have large print and that’s a lot easier for me to read these days.”
- “Walking the dog. I don’t know if it has a lot of meaning to anyone but me and the dog, but we like going to the park where all of the other people have their dogs. It’s pretty entertaining.”
- “I’m only 52, but I found a support group for young families facing Alzheimer’s and that weekly group is a very meaningful activity to me. Keeps me going!”
- “Anything with nature involved is meaningful to me. I work in the garden when the weather allows, and I like to walk in the park or the local nursery and just look at the plants. I might see if I can volunteer at the nursery.”
- “I’ve been working with my daughter to tape record my memories. It’s hard for me to write these days, but I can sure talk! She asks the questions and I do the talking, and we’re having a lot of fun.”



Reference: "Brainstorming." Perspectives – A Newsletter for Individuals with Alzheimer's or a Related Disorder, Vol 13, No 1. Published by the University of California San Diego, Shiley- Marcos Alzheimer's Disease Research Center

Healthy Eating

What is healthy eating?

Healthy eating does not mean that you can never eat your favourite foods again or that you have to 'diet' or buy 'special foods'. Rather, it means learning to make healthier choices in the foods you eat, finding new or different ways to prepare these foods, and eating in moderation. Here are some basic principles to help you start eating healthier:

1. Eating a variety of foods.

This allows the body to get all the essential nutrients it needs to function well. These nutrients include protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals. Taking vitamins and food supplements can never replace eating a variety of foods. These "extras" contain only the nutrients we know about. To get all the essential nutrients (both known and unknown), we need to eat a variety of foods.

2. Eating regularly and eating breakfast every day.

This provides the body with the fuel it needs to function well throughout the day. Breakfast is important because it is the first source of energy for the body after a long night of fasting. Deciding how to space the meals will depend on an individual's needs. Some people may do well with three regular meals spaced four to five hours apart, while others may need to eat smaller, more frequent meals or snacks during the day.

3. Eating the same amount at each meal.

This ensures that the body has an adequate supply of energy to function optimally throughout the day. Not eating enough or skipping meals can throw your system off and lead to habits such as snacking on sweets and 'junk' food. Eating too much can cause problems as well, such as indigestion or increased discomfort.

Adapted from: Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions – BC Ministry of Health Services



A great way to start healthy eating habits is to follow **Canada's Food Guide**, a free publication provided by Health Canada.

To download or order a copy of the guide, visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide or call 1-866-225-0709.

Shaping the Journey: Living with Dementia™

Shaping the Journey: living with dementia™ is a unique educational series developed by the Alzheimer Society of B.C. The six-session program is designed for people experiencing the early symptoms of Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia, as well as a care-partner, family member, or friend. It is this joint learning environment that makes the program unique. *Shaping the Journey* focuses on improving health and wellness in a variety of ways, such as:

- Exploring strategies for coping with a recent diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or another dementia.
- Providing tips for maintaining your health while living with dementia.
- Including a session on maintaining your spirit when facing challenges associated with the disease.
- Offering an opportunity to socialize and connect with others who are in a similar situation.

Contact your local Alzheimer Society of B.C. Resource Centre to find out when *Shaping the Journey: living with dementia™* will be taking place in your area.



Participants attend the Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s *Shaping the Journey: living with dementia™* program in Vancouver.

We asked our Early-Stage Support Group members: What does "health" or "wellness" mean to you?

"Social contact is a very important component of my health and wellness."

"I see my health as completely separate from my diagnosis of dementia."

"We can't all have health but we can have a sense of well-being."

"Health is physical.....wellness is thinking."

Early-Stage Support Group Summer Picnic

Members of the Vancouver Early-Stage Support Group got together on July 20th for their annual summer picnic at Locarno Beach. The picnic invitation promised "Sun! Fun! Friendship! And Great Food" and the laughter and smiles from everyone showed it to be a success on all counts. From singing songs; to playing games... badminton, croquet, and blowing bubbles; to sharing the friendship of a social event - our picnic was proof that happiness and health are found in the little things!!



Members of the Vancouver Early-Stage Support Group, family members and friends play a friendly game of badminton at Locarno Beach.

Notes and Events

DEMENTIA HELPLINE



1-800-936-6033
(Lower Mainland 604-681-8651)

Helping people with dementia, their friends, and their family members to build the confidence to maintain quality of life when facing dementia.



Our Vision

Our ultimate vision is to create a world without Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

Our Mission

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. exists to alleviate the personal and social consequences of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, to promote public awareness and to search for the causes and the cure.

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. relies on the generosity of individuals and the community to ensure families have access to the knowledge, skills and tools they need to live well with dementia. Your donation will help make the journey easier for families impacted by Alzheimer's disease or related dementias.

Contribute to Insight!

We really want you to feel part of this bulletin. You can contribute in the following ways:

- Send us news from your support group. For example, what topics of interest or activities have you covered?
- Submit articles on how to live a full and meaningful life after a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia.
- Drop off photographs.

Send your contributions to the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

(Attention: *Insight*)

Fax: 604-669-6907

Email: info@alzheimerbc.org

Mail: Alzheimer Society of B.C.
300-828 West 8th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Z 1E2

Healthlink BC – Call 811

Speak with a nurse, consult a pharmacist, or get healthy eating advice from a dietician. This service is free of charge and available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Simply dial 811 for health information and answers to non-emergency questions.

Information is also available online at www.healthlinkbc.ca

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