

# PERSPECTIVES

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## Exercise is *Still* Good for You *Finding Meaning in Movement*

Recent research presented this summer in Vancouver, Canada, at the International Conference on Alzheimer's Disease reinforced the importance and benefit of exercise for persons with both Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) and Alzheimer's disease (see page 7). Although we have reported on the benefits of exercise in past issues of Perspectives, this important topic deserves repeat attention. So don't turn the page yet! Even if you are not a fan of exercise, or are not mobile, it's possible to find a form of movement that can be meaningful and rewarding for both your mind and body.

### Physical, Emotional, and Cognitive (Thinking) Benefits of Exercise

Regular exercise helps to maintain a healthy heart, control weight, and preserve muscle strength. Exercise can also provide the additional benefits of improving blood flow to your brain, elevating your mood, releasing tension, and maintaining your flexibility and mobility. Some find that physical exercise takes their mind off of memory problems and provides a welcome, refreshing activity.

Research also suggests that people with MCI or early-stage Alzheimer's may be able to preserve their brain function and strengthen their thinking abilities for a

longer period of time by exercising regularly. Many people do report that they think more clearly and feel more mentally alert after exercise. Exercise can also help to improve mood and ward off depression or irritability by releasing endorphines in the brain that contribute to a feeling of well being. Those who exercise often report feeling brighter and in a better mood afterwards. Enjoyable social activity can also reduce stress and exercising with others gives the added benefit of social stimulation.

Some people with Alzheimer's or a related disorder become more sedentary, which can result in decreased muscle strength, bone density loss, and reduced flexibility. Maintaining strong muscles, balance, and coordination may help you function independently for a longer period of time and reduce your risk of injury from falls, sprains, or other accidents.



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## Exercise is *Still* Good for You

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### What Type and Amount of Exercise is Best?

There are many forms of exercise and you can find the one best suited to you. Walking and swimming are two of the safest and most popular methods, but exercise can also be incorporated into sports such as bowling, golfing, or tennis. Some get their exercise through enjoyable hobbies such as dancing or working in the yard.

Check with your local senior center or gym for exercise classes. You may enjoy working with a trainer experienced in senior fitness who can help guide you through a stretching or weight training routine. Weight training can help to maintain both muscle tone and bone density. A growing number of people are also discovering the benefits of yoga or the Chinese practices of tai-chi or qigong. These forms of focused exercise can help with strength, balance, and flexibility and can be adapted to people of all ages and physical abilities.

### If You Are Physically Disabled

Exercise can be a rewarding and meaningful part of maintaining overall well-being

for people with physical disabilities. If you have difficulty with movement or require a wheelchair, you may be able to benefit from exercise programs in your community specifically designed for people with physical disabilities. Check with your local senior center, community college, or university for classes. Organizations devoted to Parkinson's disease can also be helpful resources for adaptive exercise programs. An exercise routine can be modified to respect your limitations while capitalizing on your existing strengths. You can also consult with your physician about the possible benefits of physical or occupational therapists who can work with you on exercises that can maximize your abilities, provide enjoyable activity, and help to reduce risk of injury.

### Pay Attention to Safety

Some people exercise to improve their well-being only to end up injuring themselves in the process. It is important to tailor a program to meet your own specific needs, health condition, and body type. If you have a long history of exercise, you may be accustomed to a routine that works for you. If you are new to exercise, or starting a different type of activity, consult with your physician before beginning your routine.

Any exercise should begin gradually and include gentle stretching before and after your exercise period so your muscles have a chance to warm up and cool down. Exercise in well-lit places, ideally with even surfaces. If you walk or jog, stick to routes with familiar terrain so you can avoid broken sidewalks or unexpected curbs. Walkers or hikers can also benefit from using a walking stick or hiking poles available in sporting goods stores to assist with balance.

### Getting Motivated

If you do not enjoy the thought or practice or exercise just try to gradually increase

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## Exercise is *Still* Good for You

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your daily physical activity. Consider the following simple opportunities for increasing your movement:

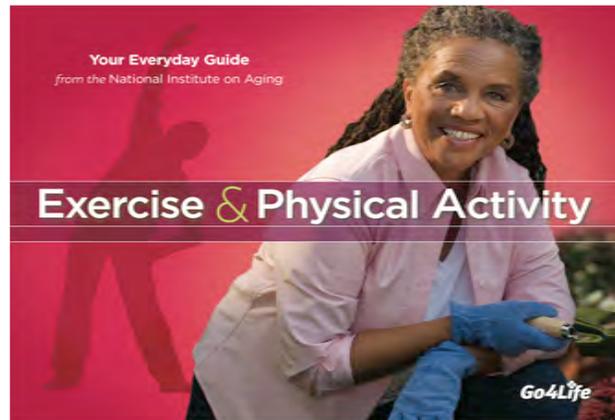
- Walk up a flight of stairs instead of taking an elevator.
- Sweep your yard with a broom instead of an electric blower.
- Push your grandchild in a swing.
- Throw a ball for your dog.
- Get up from your chair to get a cookie instead of placing the bag next to you.
- Dust the objects in your long-overlooked curio cabinet.
- Dance in your living room to your favorite music.
- Slowly pedal a stationary bike while you watch television.
- When you walk out to get your mail at the mailbox, take a few more minutes to walk up the street and back.

Any movement is better than none. It does not have to be strenuous to be beneficial. But if you can gently get your body in motion a bit more throughout the day and periodically increase your heart rate, you may feel better and be motivated to increase your activity level. For some people, picking a set time for exercise each day helps to develop a regular routine.

Finally, remind yourself of the benefits of movement and exercise. Exercise can help to maintain or strengthen existing physical abilities while also having a positive impact in many other areas that affect your quality of life. If you follow sound safety precautions, exercise may be one of the more effective treatments for managing Alzheimer's or related disorders.

*This article has been revised from Chapter 19 of the book "Living Your Best with Early-Stage Alzheimer's" by Lisa Snyder.*  
<http://www.amazon.com/Living-Your-Best-Early-Stage-Alzheimers/dp/1934716030>

## HELPFUL RESOURCES



The National Institutes on Aging has recently released an free updated 120-page guide that describes the benefits of exercise and physical activity for older people. The booklet discusses how to set exercise goals and how to incorporate exercise and movement into daily life. Sample exercises focus on endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility. The booklet also addresses healthy eating and how to stay motivated.

Read, download, or order a free copy of *Exercise & Physical Activity* at:

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/exercise>

You can also call 1-800-222-2225.



Learn more about the National Institute on Aging's exercise and physical activity campaign by visiting *Go4Life* at: <http://go4life.nia.nih.gov/> *Go4Life* was designed to help adults 50 and older incorporate more exercise and physical activity into their daily lives. On the website you can watch exercise videos, submit your own exercise success stories, print educational tip sheets, and use the interactive tools in the *MyGo4Life* section to make an exercise plan and track your progress.

# Plan For the Future But Live in the “Now”

By Charles G. Warner

I was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s in December of 2011. My physician was quite to the point; he told me the diagnosis and said “no more practicing law and no more driving.” Although somewhat taken aback, and I confess a bit in denial, I appreciated his being direct and followed his advice. I closed my law practice and began a new and different life.

I knew I needed to plan for the financial future and to come to terms with having Alzheimer’s. I will explain how to address the financial (estate planning) issues. I am still working on dealing with the disease, so that will be a progress report.

## Estate Planning

My first piece of advice: Plan ahead. Do your estate-planning plan *now*:

Estate planning is, among other things, the preparation of wills, trusts, advanced health care directives, and generally what you wish to have happen with all of your assets and possessions upon your incapacity and/or death. This is obvious, of course, but planning your estate is part of acknowledging the disease and its progression. As a person with Alzheimer’s you want to do this *now* while you have the capacity to make your wishes known and memorialized in legal documents.

Preparation of the necessary documents does require using an attorney. You need an attorney who has expertise in the preparation of the documents necessary to carry out your wishes as to the disposition of your personal and real property. These

types of attorneys usually hold themselves out as ones doing estate planning, estates and trusts, and/or wills and trusts, or descriptions similar to these.

The second step: Find a good attorney. How do you find an estate planning attorney and how do you know whether he or she is good? There are at least three free rating services available on the Internet.

Review the website: [www.martindale.com](http://www.martindale.com). Martindale Hubble is the oldest nationwide rating service for lawyers. Find lawyers in your geographical area in “estate planning.” You can review their various qualifications *if* they are listed. The ratings listings are “av”; “bv”; and “cv”. The ratings, as explained by Martindale Hubbell, are below:



- AV Preeminent (4.5-5.0)- AV Preeminent is a significant rating accomplishment and a testament to the fact that a lawyer's peers rank him or her at the highest level of professional excellence.

- BV Distinguished (3.0-4.4) - BV Distinguished is an excellent rating for a lawyer with some experience. A widely respected mark of achievement, it differentiates a lawyer from his or her competition.

- Rated (1.0-2.9) - The Peer Review Rated designation demonstrates that the lawyer has met the very high criteria of General Ethical Standing.

Another newer national rating service, also accessible on the Internet, is Avvo. It can be accessed at [www.Avvo.com](http://www.Avvo.com). On Avvo.com look for “lawyers”, then find the state, county, and city most convenient for you. Finally look for the lawyers in estate

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## Plan For the Future

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planning. “Superb” is the highest rating. They also post any discipline imposed on any lawyer by the applicable state bar association.

Last but not least, there is a supplement to San Francisco Magazine published in the Spring of each year entitled “Super Lawyers.” “Super Lawyers” is also published in most other states in different periodicals. The names of those publications will be on their website. This lists the top five percent of attorneys in their fields of practice by county. The ratings are based upon peer evaluations by other lawyers as well as research by the Super Lawyers staff. You can access it on the Internet at [www.SuperLawyers.com](http://www.SuperLawyers.com).

Some may ask: “Do I really need a lawyer?” The answer is “Yes”. Estate planning is too complex and involves very sophisticated legal and financial planning. The estate plan then has to be put in legal documents that will be acceptable to a court if there is an objection (sometimes called a “contest”) or questions by heirs. Even being a lawyer, but not an estate planning lawyer, I would *not* have attempted it myself.

Before you go to your chosen lawyer, discuss with your spouse what your wishes are as to the disposition of your estate. What assets do you have? What are they worth? What disposition do you wish to make with regard to those assets, when and to whom? Take all of this information in written form with you when you go to the lawyer of your choice. Remember, this is not an adversarial process. The lawyer is there to carry out *your* wishes in legal documents.

## *A Realization: Living in the “Now”*

More important, and probably more difficult, is living life with Alzheimer’s. I have no magical answers. I can share the philosophy I am working on now to deal with the disease.

An Alzheimer’s diagnosis is devastating. At least it was for me. When I was diagnosed, I became obsessed about what changes in my life it would inevitably cause knowing what informed people say about the current state of knowledge as to what the future outcome is going to be. I worried incessantly about my wife, my children and, of course, myself.

In retrospect, spending a lot of time worrying about myself was a mistake. It is important to plan for the future, but do

*“In retrospect, spending a lot of time worrying about myself was a mistake. It is important to plan for the future, but do not let what is going to happen in the future ruin the life you can live now, before the disease progresses.”*

not let what is going to happen in the future ruin the life you can live now, before the disease progresses. I like to think of it as “living in the now.” Living in the now means to me that we are better off to look at

what we have left and not obsess about what we have lost. One problem with dwelling on what is going to occur in the future is that we may turn around someday to find the future has run out on us.

As Henry James wrote in *The Ambassadors* in 1903: “*Live all you can; it’s a mistake not to. It doesn’t so much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have had your life. If you haven’t had that, what have you had?*”



## Discovering Memories at the Movies



**A**rtists for Alzheimer's (ARTZ) is an organization that links artists and cultural institutions to people living with dementia and their care partners. This fall ARTZ, in partnership with Coolidge Corner Theatre in Brookline, Massachusetts is producing a cinematic educational program specifically designed for people with Alzheimer's or related memory loss. *Meet Me at the Coolidge* is an event that will feature iconic film clips that are specifically selected to prompt long-term memories and self-awareness for individuals with Alzheimer's and their care partners.

Focusing in depth on icons from Hollywood's golden age, the program will include performances by such legendary stars as Jimmy Stewart, Katherine Hepburn, Humphrey Bogart, and Judy Garland among others. In pilot programs, ARTZ educators have learned that the act of viewing certain film scenes can have an immediate effect on individuals with dementia, even those who have been living with symptoms for many years. Care partners, health care professionals, and loved ones also enjoy the opportunity to see participants in a different setting—one in which they are able to thrive and achieve a greater sense of selfhood.

The program was created by John Zeisel, PhD, and Sean Caulfield, founders of

ARTZ. To develop the program, Dr. Zeisel and Mr. Caulfield first conducted focused interviews with potential participants to determine which films would most resonate with the audience. ARTZ volunteers were given special training sessions by Dr. Zeisel and Mr. Caulfield to learn about the experience of Alzheimer's and to develop specific approaches to keep participants' attention focused and to make them comfortable. Test screenings have since been given at assisted living memory residences and adult day programs in Boston and New York City. Participants enjoy popcorn and soda as part of the movie viewing experience.

The movie program gives those living with memory loss an expressive outlet and forum for dialogue through the viewing of pre-selected film scenes, immediately followed by group discussion. Volunteers from ARTZ work with audience members to engage in reminiscence and to highlight themes, such as family, love, the Great Depression, and old Hollywood. Volunteers and others involved with the theatres note that the viewers with Alzheimer's can often recall considerable details about these old movies and their stars. In discussions following the movie, it is often difficult to tell who is the person with memory loss and who is their accompanying care partner!

According to Dr. Zeisel, *"When people living with Alzheimer's disease recognize a special movie clip from their past, their responses are amazing. The insights that I have witnessed in Alzheimer's focus groups are profound and to the point, their behavior shows much less agitation and anxiety, and they themselves are transformed by the experience. The impact can last for days and participants remember the experience long after."*

For more information on *Meet Me at the Coolidge* and other ARTZ program initiatives, visit their website at: [www.ArtistsForAlzheimers.org](http://www.ArtistsForAlzheimers.org)

# RESEARCH UPDATES

## Hopeful News About Gammagard



Gammagard (also known as intravenous immunoglobulin or IVIG) is an intravenous immune system treatment made from natural antibodies taken from blood donors. Researchers have been investigating the use of IVIG in persons with Alzheimer's and reports from preliminary studies suggest that treatment can limit damage to the brain caused by amyloid protein plaques and also stop brain inflammation associated with Alzheimer's. In a small Phase 2 clinical trial of IVIG, researchers recently reported that patients receiving the treatment showed improvements in thinking abilities, behavior, and daily functioning. Those receiving the highest dose over the course of the three-year study showed no decline on measures of thinking, daily functioning, and mood.

The findings from this study are very encouraging, but aren't conclusive due to the small number of participants. Results of a larger Phase 3 study of IVIG's effectiveness will be released early in 2013 and we will eagerly await the results.

## The Benefits of Exercise



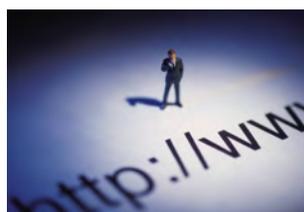
Findings from two recent studies support the ability of specific kinds of exercise to promote improved mental functioning and reduce the risk for dementia in those with mild cognitive impairment (MCI). MCI involves problems with memory, language, thinking and judgment that are greater than typical age-related changes, but not significant enough to interfere with daily functioning.

MCI places one at increased risk for Alzheimer's or a related dementia. Researchers hope to keep people with MCI from advancing into dementia.

A Japanese study followed older adults ages 65 to 93 for 12 months. They were assigned to either a 90-minute supervised exercise program of aerobic exercise, strength training and balance training twice a week, or no exercise. At the end of the year, the exercise group showed improved memory and language abilities.

A Canadian study looked at women ages 60-to-70 with mild memory problems who were assigned to either resistance training (weight lifting), aerobic exercise (such as walking), or balance and tone exercises, twice weekly for six months. Resistance training significantly improved attention, memory and some thinking abilities. Previous research has shown a positive effect of aerobic activity on thinking abilities, but resistance training may also provide benefits to the brain.

## Newly Updated Clinical Trials Finder



An informative and updated service from the National Institute on Aging (NIA) Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral (ADEAR) is making it easier for people to find clinical research studies across the United States that are testing new ways to detect, treat, delay, and prevent MCI, Alzheimer's, and related disorders. Diagnosed persons, caregivers, and healthy volunteers with or without a family history of Alzheimer's or a related disorder can visit ADEAR's clinical trial finding service at:

[www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/clinical-trials](http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/clinical-trials)

The internet-based service affords people multiple ways to find clinical trials anywhere in the United States. For assistance with the site, you can call ADEAR toll-free at: 1-800-438-4380.

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