

# New research finds exercise may help slow memory loss for people living with Alzheimer's dementia

26 February 2021



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Promising new research shows aerobic exercise may help slow memory loss for older adults living with Alzheimer's dementia.

ASU Edson College of Nursing and Health Innovation Professor Fang Yu led a pilot randomized control trial that included 96 older adults living with mild to moderate Alzheimer's dementia.

Participants were randomized to either a cycling (stationary bike) or stretching intervention for six months. Using the Alzheimer's Disease Assessment Scale-Cognition (ADAS-Cog) to assess cognition, the results of the trial were substantial.

The six-month change in ADAS-Cog was  $1.0 \pm 4.6$  (cycling) and  $0.1 \pm 4.1$  (stretching), which were both significantly less than the expected  $3.2 \pm 6.3$ -point increase observed naturally with [disease progression](#).

"Our primary finding indicates that a six-month [aerobic exercise](#) intervention significantly reduced [cognitive decline](#) in comparison to the natural course of changes for Alzheimer's dementia. However, we didn't find a superior effect of aerobic exercise to stretching, which is likely due to the pilot nature of our trial. We don't have the statistical power to detect between-group differences, there was substantial social interaction effect in the stretching group, and many stretching participants did aerobic exercise on their own." Yu said.

The findings are described in a recently published article, Cognitive Effects of Aerobic Exercise in Alzheimer's Disease: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial, in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*.

Yu says their results are encouraging and support the clinical relevance of promoting aerobic exercise in individuals with Alzheimer's dementia to maintain cognition.

"Aerobic exercise has a low profile of adverse events in [older adults](#) with Alzheimer's [dementia](#) as demonstrated by our trial," said Yu. "Regardless of its effect on cognition, the current collective evidence on its benefits supports the use of aerobic exercise as an additional therapy for Alzheimer's [disease](#)."

**More information:** Fang Yu et al, Cognitive Effects of Aerobic Exercise in Alzheimer's Disease: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial, *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* (2021). [DOI: 10.3233/JAD-201100](#)

Provided by IOS Press

APA citation: New research finds exercise may help slow memory loss for people living with Alzheimer's dementia (2021, February 26) retrieved 26 April 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-02-memory-loss-people-alzheimer-dementia.html>

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