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# Physical activity Chronic Health Conditions & Dementia In older people.

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HOSPITAL

Part of **AlfredHealth**

# Session Outline

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- Chronic illness and its impact on cognition
- Importance of exercise
  - Reducing risk of dementia
  - Improving cognition
  - Symptom management
- Implications for practice

# Common factors affecting cognition

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- Pain
  - eg: arthritis, injury
- Tiredness
  - eg: sleep apnoea, insomnia, poor sleep due to pain
- Viruses & illnesses
- Sensory loss
  - sight and hearing
- These all impact on your ability to take in information, which has a secondary impact on cognition, particularly in older age.

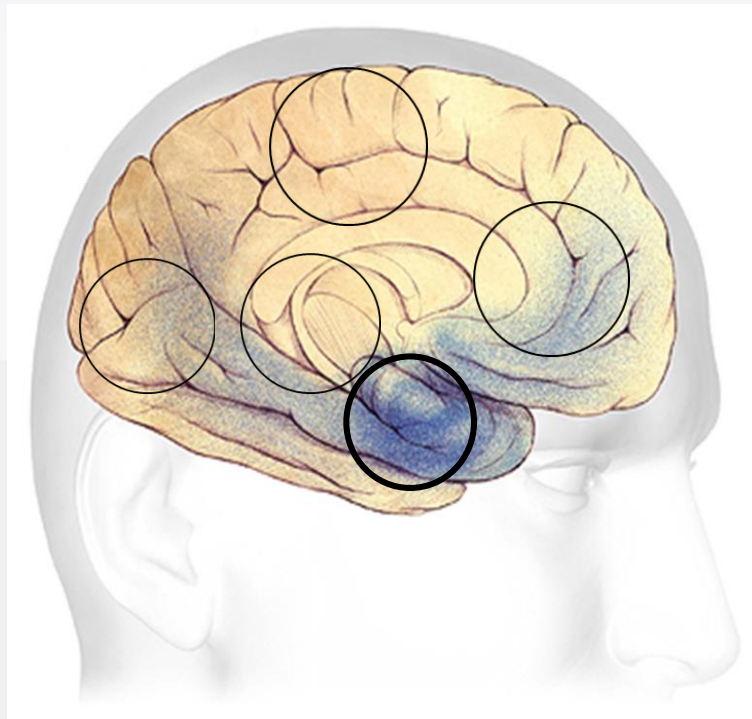
# Illnesses affecting cognition / memory

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- Depression, anxiety, stress
- Vascular disease
  - Strokes, heart disease, diabetes
- Metabolic disorders
- Alcohol abuse
- Other neurological diseases
  - Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, HIV/Aids
- Dementia
  - Alzheimer's, Vascular dementia, Fronto-temporal dementia, Lewy Body dementia

# Symptoms

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- Memory
- Thinking planning, reasoning & behaviour
- Speaking, understanding speech
- Your sense of where your body is in relation to things around you.
- Ability to interpret what the eyes see

# Benefits of Exercise

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- Reducing the risk of developing dementia or delaying onset

*Dementia was 88% less likely among women of high fitness in midlife compared to those of medium fitness.*

*If dementia did develop (5%) then onset on average was 11 years later*

*(Horder, Neurology 2018)*

# Benefits of Exercise

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## Symptom management

- Improved cognition  
increased hippocampal volume in the brain.  
*(Erikson, 2010)*
- Coordination, balance & maintenance of motor skills  
reduced risk of falls
- Well being, self efficacy, mood and behaviour

# Implications for practice

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- **People with chronic health conditions, including dementia should be encouraged and supported to participate in regular physical exercise.**
- **Focus on abilities not lost skills.**
  - Small groups
  - Reduce distractions
  - allow for and compensate for cognitive impairment
  - Reduce reliance on memory – providing prompts, reminders, regular instruction and demonstration (visual vs verbal or practical learning styles)
  - Simplify instructions – one step/idea at a time,
  - Speak clearly, ensure eye contact, clarify understanding, give time for responses
  - Encourage emotional connection – music, rhythm.
  - Consider the time of day that cognition is best.
  - Provide structure and routine.
- **Promote self esteem, enjoyment and social contact**
- **Work with client's health professionals and family**
  - To understand the client's preferences, history and issues
  - To develop relevant program and support participation



# DISCUSSION & QUESTIONS?

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