

5 Games You Should Play to Combat Alzheimer's

The sixth-leading cause of disease in the United States, [Alzheimer's disease](#) kills more people than breast and prostate cancer combined. More than five million Americans are living with Alzheimer's, and one in three seniors dies with Alzheimer's or another dementia. Estimates show that by 2050, the number of American's with Alzheimer's may triple to nearly 14 million.

Alzheimer's is a brain disease that results in the slow decline of memory, thinking, and reasoning skills. Early signs of Alzheimer's include memory loss that disrupts daily life, challenges in planning or problem solving, difficulty completing familiar tasks, and confusion with time or place. If you notice these signs, you should not ignore them and meet with a doctor. Early detection gives you the chance to get relief from symptoms and be independent longer. Whether you are showing early signs of Alzheimer's or another dementia, you should begin playing games to combat your risk of the disease.

1. Bingo

A study in the American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementia highlights the benefits of [playing bingo](#) for Alzheimer's and dementia patients. Bingo is mentally stimulating and provides therapy for people with cognitive disorders. Patients have increased alertness and awareness that lasts for hours after playing the game. Because it requires that people match numbers and letters and recognize winning combinations, it improves cognition.



For people in more advanced stages of Alzheimer's, it is helpful to adapt the game to their abilities. For example, they may have to identify colors, shapes, animals, food items, etc. rather than letters and numbers when playing.

2. Brain HQ

While some caregivers and doctors do not recommend that seniors play computer games because they do not involve social interaction that provides mental stimulation in and of itself, [researchers](#) encourage seniors to play the computer game Brain HQ. According to researchers from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the training provided by the game cuts the incidence of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias in older adults by 50% a decade after they complete the game. Brain HQ also is available as an app for smartphones and tablets.

3. Card Games

The benefits of [playing](#) card games to combat Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are numerous. First, seniors enjoy the social interaction and relationships that grow from joining card clubs. They also enjoy the nostalgia and memories that are stirred by sitting around a table and playing cards with friends and family. Card games also range in difficulty level, so people with varying abilities can play. Cards also feature large print and are easy to see by the elderly.

Most important, playing cards boosts the mind. Card games require strategy, math skills, and problem-solving. People who play cards also give their memory a workout because they need to recall cards that have been played, rules of the games, and more. The exercise the brain gets when you play cards is beneficial for everyone, but it especially helps people with early signs of Alzheimer's.

4. Board Games

[Board games](#) are another great way to exercise the brain and boost cognition for people at risk of developing dementia. By playing board games, you practice essential cognitive skills like problem-solving. Board games also require different parts of the brain to fire and function, and certain areas of the brain that drive complex thought and memory formation like the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex are essential for playing board games. Similarly, board games aid the brain in retaining and building cognitive associations in older players as well as young players.

5. Puzzles

Putting together [puzzles](#) provides mental stimulation for people with dementia and Alzheimer's. Specifically, the cognitive stimulation provided by puzzles keeps the brain engaged and active to help combat the deterioration of the brain that characterizes dementia. Loved ones and caregivers should be sure to match the difficulty level of the puzzle to the patient to ward off frustration.

Puzzles also have a calming effect on Alzheimer's patients because they are methodical and require little to no help from a caregiver. When people with dementia complete puzzles, they feel more independent and in control while boosting their problem-solving skills.

While there is no way to prevent or cure Alzheimer's, research shows that playing games and completing puzzles boosts cognitive skills and engages the brain to relieve symptoms of the disease.

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