



Wall Pushups

The wall pushup is a modified version of the pushup. It is less challenging than a classic pushup and won't require you to get down on the floor. It will help to strengthen your arms, shoulders, and chest.

1. Find a wall that is clear of any objects (wall hangings, windows, etc). Stand a little farther than arm's length from the wall.
 2. Facing the wall, lean your body forward and place your palms flat against the wall at about shoulder height and shoulder-width apart.
 3. To a count of four, bend your elbows as you lower your upper body toward the wall in a slow, controlled motion, keeping your feet planted.
 4. Pause. Then, to a count of two, slowly push yourself back until your arms are straight — but don't lock your elbows.
 5. Repeat 10 times for one set. Rest for one to two minutes. Then complete a second set of 10 repetitions.
- Things to remember:
— Don't round or arch your back.
— Breathe through the exercise.



Begin leaning against wall, palms flat, shoulder-width apart.



Bend elbows, lower your upper body toward wall.

• This exercise was contributed by Erin Kilbride and Erin Nitschke. Kilbride is an exercise physiologist and personal trainer at Wyoming Rehab and a certified health and fitness instructor with eight years' experience in the health and fitness profession. Nitschke is the fitness center coordinator for Wyoming Rehab and an exercise physiologist and certified personal trainer through the National Strength and Conditioning Association.

Where am I ... and who are you?

• Alzheimer's presents emotional challenges for caregivers

By **Melissa Brackley**
Sheridan Press intern

Imagine waking in your own home and not knowing where you are.

Imagine living with strangers who are your own family members. Imagine taking care of someone with these symptoms on a daily basis.

The world of Alzheimer's and related dementia disorders can be detrimental to families, but fortunately, Sheridan offers outlets of support to help families and caretakers through the process.

"The hardest part about taking care of a loved one with a dementia is that you lose them every day," said Stella Montano, whose mother suffers from Alzheimer's. "You have to cherish moments that are good, because they slip away."

Montano, who wakes her mother every morning and helps her get ready for the day, said her mother is in the middle stages of Alzheimer's drifting in and out of her own space and time.

"Some days I'll be helping her tie her shoes or brush her hair," Montano said, "and my mom will touch me, and for that moment she knows I'm her daughter — or at least someone she loves."

But Montano added that this recognition can change from minute to minute, and those good moments can be just as painful because they are so fleeting.

As director of family caregiver services at the Senior Center, Montano runs two caregiver support groups every Monday, at 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., for people who take care of loved ones with a variety of diseases; most care for people with some form of dementia.

Montano said the group provides a supportive outlet for caregivers to vent, laugh, and share practical advice.

She stressed that each family's situation is unique, and the group allows for those differences.

In fact, when people join the group, current member Wayne Dygert always says, "When you've seen one patient with Alzheimer's, you've seen one."

Montano said listening to individual stories and understanding that not everyone is the same are important in supporting the people who care



Courtesy photo

Cathy Fried, a certified nursing assistant for Respite and In-home Services from the Senior Citizens Center, looks over a photo album with Stella Montano's mother, Piedra Martinez, who suffers from Alzheimer's.

for these individuals.

Dygert's wife, Betty, who cares for her sister, said being in the caregiver group has done a great deal for her.

"There's not much it hasn't done for me," she said. "I can't bring my sister back, but it's a relief to be able to say anything in front of people who understand what I'm going through."

Dr. Jorge I. Ramirez of Sheridan VA Medical Center said because there is no cure for Alzheimer's, treatment of symptoms and support for patients and caregivers are the biggest emphases.

"Basically the most challenging aspect is identifying the early stages of the disease so we can mobilize resources and discuss what is to come in the progression of the disorder," he said.

But Ramirez noted that identifying early stages is not easy.

"The symptoms can be subtle," he said. "Sometimes spouses will come to me speaking of small personality changes or forgetfulness, but these can be seen in people who are still functioning on a daily basis."

He added that Alzheimer's is also difficult to distinguish from other dementia disorders.

"Dementia is really a diagnosis of exclusion," he said. "After a battery of blood tests and a CAT scan, we can eliminate the possibil-

ity of other disorders. But differentiating between Alzheimer's and other dementias is really just an academic exercise."

Montano said many caregivers struggle with the lack of identification and validation.

"A diagnosis isn't always there," she said, "but you just know they're different, and that's all that matters."

But the constant care-taking of loved ones with dementia can wear on family members, said Montano.

She said the Senior Center has a respite program where certified nursing assistants can relieve caregivers for a few hours or days so they can have some time to themselves.

Montano said she uses respite service to let her father take a break from caring for her mother.

"He has two hours where, even if he's just out in the garage, he doesn't have to think about it," she said. "He doesn't have to watch her constantly to make sure she doesn't fall or wander or become agitated."

Ramirez said the VA also offers respite care for families of veterans that need to rest from the continual care that many patients with dementia require.

Tonya Murner, social services director at Westview Health Care Center, said for Alzheimer's patients needing more supervision, Westview offers a variety of services.

"We see patients of all progressions of the disorder," she said. "Some are newly diagnosed and still recognize their families, and some have even lost the ability to speak."

She said the nursing home works with individual patients to address their needs.

"Some patients live with other residents," she said, "and some who wander or are a safety risk are placed in our secured unit."

Murner added that Westview welcomes family support.

Montano said she has a library of materials that can help families and caregivers deal with daily care-taking.

Montano also creates a caregiver newsletter every two months and is planning to host a caregiver conference this fall.

"If there's one thing I could tell people who take care of loved ones with Alzheimer's," she said, "it's to get support. Don't wait until there is a crisis, get support now."

What is Alzheimer's?

According to the Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's disease is a "progressive brain disorder that gradually destroys a person's memory and ability to learn, reason, make judgments, communicate, and carry out daily activities."

Currently, more than 5 million people in the United States suffer from the disease or a related dementia, and the duration can be between three and 20 years.

Alzheimer's can be linked to age, genetics, and even brain injury. There is no cure, and understanding of the disorder is still limited.

If you are concerned that someone you know may be experiencing early symptoms of Alzheimer's, here are some things to look for.

- Memory loss — forgetting more often and not recalling information later.
- Difficulty performing normal tasks — having trouble planning and completing everyday tasks. This can include forgetting basic steps involved in daily activities such as making a phone call or playing a game.
- Problems with language — forgetting basic words.
- Disorientation of time and place — becoming lost in one's own neighborhood or forgetting where one is and how to get back home.
- Poor or decreased judgment — this can be as simple as dressing inappropriately for the weather or spending money unwisely.
- Problems with abstract thinking — difficulty performing mental tasks.
- Misplacing things — may put things in unusual places or lose items often.
- Changes in mood or behavior — may show rapid mood swings for no apparent reason.
- Changes in personality — becoming extremely confused, suspicious, fearful, or dependent.
- Loss of initiative — becoming very passive, sleeping more than usual, and not wanting to do usual activities.