

# Adult Day Programs

## What is an adult day program?

Adult day programs offer people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias the opportunity to be social and to participate in activities in a safe environment. Time spent at an adult day program also provides respite for family caregivers by giving them a regular break from their care responsibilities.

## How does an adult day program benefit the older person?

- **Socialization and activity**

Inactivity can lead to boredom, depression, irritability, and health complications. An adult day program provides mental and physical stimulation that may be harder for people with dementia to get at home. It also helps to decrease isolation and gives people new opportunities for friendship and recreation.

- **Health and wellbeing**

Adult day programs support and supervise each participant to ensure his or her safety and wellbeing. Many programs offer meals and help with administering medications, and some have staff to monitor the health and nutritional needs of participants. Staff typically keeps in touch with family members and other providers to talk about potential problems or ways to improve a participant's wellbeing.

- **Promotes positive self-image**

Each participant is seen as a unique individual with strengths and needs, but also with potential for growth and development. With support for functional limitations, each participant is encouraged to try new activities and is applauded for even small improvements. Such successes are important in preserving dignity and self-esteem.

## Who is appropriate for an adult day program?

This type of program is great for someone whose social activities are restricted due to physical and/or memory disabilities. Many people who might be described as shy, introverted, or quiet also do well, but they may take a bit longer and need more encouragement to feel comfortable with getting to know the staff and other participants.

## When is the right time to enter an adult day program?

Families often consider a number of factors, such as the person's need for socialization and activity, his or her personality and willingness to attend, and the amount of stress on the caregiver. Many people enter an adult day program when they can no longer be safely left at home alone.

## How can I enroll my loved one in an adult day program?

The first step is usually a phone call requesting information about the program. Once the caregiver has reviewed this information, s/he might want to call back to schedule a visit and arrange for a tour of the program (see our “Questions to Ask” handout for more ideas.) The first visit can be made with or without the person with dementia. However, families and program staff may want to set up a “trial visit” for the person to come in to see if it is a good fit.

## How do I get my relative to attend an adult day program?

Attitude has a great deal of influence. If a caregiver is hesitant, this may send a negative signal to the person with dementia. Families that believe an adult day program will be as positive experience tend to transmit that confidence to the person with dementia. Telling the person they can “give it a try for a few weeks” may also be effective, as is having a physician, clergy, or other trusted person suggest or endorse the idea. Another idea is to have a family member go with the person the first few times to help the person with dementia feel more comfortable. Even if the person comes home and says that they don’t like it, they may, in reality, return the next day. To get the full picture, it is important to ask the day program staff how the person is doing there.

## How do I locate adult day programs in my area?

Contact your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA). To find which AAA serves your location, contact the Eldercare Locator toll-free at (800) 677-1116. In less populated areas, adult day programs are often found at nursing homes or assisted living facilities. You can find more information and locate a local day program at the National Adult Day Services Association’s website: [www.nadsa.org](http://www.nadsa.org).