

## Helping the caregivers

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Carers following an exercise programme reported physical and psychological benefits. Caring for someone with dementia is probably one of the most demanding and stressful tasks a person can do - yet it's a commitment embraced by around 3.5 American women. They care for spouses or parents with dementia and all too often their own physical and mental health suffers as a result.

To assess the effect of an exercise programme on caregivers, researchers at the Stanford University School of Medicine recruited a group of 51 women who were caring for a demented relative at home. The women were invited to follow a schedule of three or four 30 to 40 minute exercise sessions a week, with regular contact with a counsellor for support. Seventy per cent kept up the programme for a year, increasing the intensity of their physical activity. By the end of the year, they reported feeling less stressed, less depressed - even though their burdens had not decreased. A similar result was found among a group of caregivers who followed a nutrition programme. It may well be that regular contact with counsellors is at least in part responsible for the benefits seen in these self-care programmes.

*SOURCE*  
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