

# Adult Day Service Use Decreases Likelihood of a Missed Physician's Appointment Among Dementia Caregivers

## Why was the study done?

About 5.7 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease (AD) and AD-related disorders (ADRDs), and this number is predicted to rise to 14 million by 2050. Most persons living with ADRD rely on a family member and home/community-based services for help with care needs. Most family-caregivers are middle-to-older aged daughters and/or spouses who are also managing their own health conditions. While there are many positive effects, family caregiving can be stressful and result in poor mental and physical health. This stress and caregiving duties often makes it difficult for family caregivers to managing their own health. Adult Day Services (ADS) provide respite opportunities for family caregivers to perform activities, e.g. working or errands, and allow for others to help with daytime responsibilities. Respite provided to the caregiver through ADS may provide time for them to attend to their health needs. Thus, the primary goal of the study was to determine if ADS provides time for caregivers to attend to their own self-care and reduce missed health appointments among family caregivers.

## How was the study done?

The authors of this article relied on secondary-data collected from 509 family caregivers for individuals with mid-stage dementia who live in the community, from two outside trials: Advancing Caregiver Training (ACT; n=272) and Care of Persons with Dementia in Their Environments (COPE; n = 237). All the caregivers had to be English speaking, at least 21 years of age, living with the person with dementia, and provide at least four hours of daily caregiving.

- The outcome measured was missed physician appointments. This outcome was reported by the caregiver and reported whether they had missed one or more physician appointments in the past six months (yes/no).
- The main independent variable for the study was Adult Day Service usage. Caregivers indicated whether the care recipient used ADSs or not in the past six months (yes/no).
- The study also controlled for race, education, age, social support, employment status, the number of chronic health conditions of caregivers, and caregiver burden.

## What did the researchers find?

Almost 28% (n= 138) of the participants missed a physician's appointment in the past six months. Based on a statistical analysis, caregivers who utilized ADS were nearly 50% less likely to miss a physician's appointment compared to those who did not attend ADS. The study also found that black caregivers, compared to white caregivers, and those caregivers with an increased number of chronic health conditions, compared to those with fewer health condition, were more likely to miss a physician's appointment. Additionally, older caregivers, compared to younger caregivers, were less likely to miss a physician's appointment.

## What do the results mean?

The authors' show that ADS use may allow caregivers the respite required to attend medical appointments, an essential part of self-care. Although other studies have shown positive health benefits of ADS to caregivers' emotional and physical well-being, the current study extends these

benefits to include caregivers' health behavior. Collectively, the data support expanding on the number of ADS programs and show that health providers could consider such programs an important potential resource for families. Although ADS programs are designed to provide respite to family caregivers and functional help for the person with dementia, ADS programming could be expanded to encourage health-promoting behaviors among caregivers. Those programs could help caregivers remember to take care of themselves, as their health and well-being are central to providing quality care for the person with dementia. Home and community-based services should continue to expand to allow dementia caregivers the resources to utilize support that will promote their optimal health, and to enhance the quality of care provided to persons living with dementia.

**REFERENCE:** Parker, L. J., Gaugler, J. E., Samus, Q., & Gitlin, L. N. (2019). Adult Day Service Use Decreases Likelihood of a Missed Physician's Appointment Among Dementia Caregivers. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

In NADSA Research Roundups, we summarize recent research on ADS as a benefit to NADSA members. Due to copyright issues, we are unable to provide full-text articles. Some full-text articles may be accessed via open source platforms on the web; others will only be available through academic research databases. The scientific abstract can be read for free and the full-text article is available for purchase [here](#).