

GOLDEN YEARS

Winter weather tips offered for those with Alzheimer's

Winter weather conditions — colder temperatures, snow, ice and early darkness — can be potentially dangerous and even life-threatening for the nearly 36,000 people living with Alzheimer's and other dementia in Nebraska.

For their 40,000 caregivers, the stress and challenges of keeping their loved ones safe during this time can be overwhelming. By preparing in advance, caregivers can make a big difference in keeping their loved one with Alzheimer's and other dementia safe.

The Alzheimer's Association offers these tips to keep people living with dementia safe during the winter months:

- Be prepared. Winter storms can be dangerous. Check weather conditions regularly and have emergency plans in place.
- Bundle up. Help the person living with Alzheimer's dress warmly for winter weather conditions by wearing dry, loose-fitting layers and covering exposed skin.
- Prevent slips. Balance and mobility can be a challenge for a person living with Alzheimer's or dementia. Assume all surfaces are slick; assist the person by taking smaller steps and slowing down, so they can match gait and speed to a safer level.
- Take advantage of the daylight. Winter months bring decreased sunlight and shorter days. Visual perception can be a challenge for those living with Alzheimer's or other dementias, and can cause increased confusion or disorientation in dark or shadowy environments both inside and out.
- Prevent wandering. Wandering is one of the most frequent and challenging problems that caregivers face and can be extremely dangerous in colder conditions. Shorter days during winter months can also increase the risk of "sundowning." Monitor closely for agitation or restlessness as day transitions into night. The Alzheimer's Association offers these tips to combat sundowning.
- Buddy up: An Alzheimer's Association survey says 84 percent of caregivers said they would like more support in providing care for someone with Alzheimer's or another form of

dementia, especially from their family. It can be hard for caregivers to find time to complete simple tasks outside of the home. Don't hesitate to ask others for

help with errands, grocery shopping or with snow/ice removal.

More safety tips can be found by visiting alz.org/Nebraska. The

Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline also provides reliable information and support to all those who need assistance. Call the helpline toll-free anytime, even holidays, at 1.800.272.3900.

Astronaut Anderson

Clayton Anderson, Nebraska's only astronaut, was in Wayne recently for a visit with Wayne Elementary third and fourth grade students. Anderson had an interactive presentation with the students, helping them determine distances from the Earth to the moon and from the Earth to Mars. He conducted several 'games' in which the students were to get the spaceship (frisbee) to doc with the space station (trash can). He challenged them to keep learning and respect their teachers. His presentation was part of the READ grant received by the Wayne TeamMates program. Anderson was a member of the Expedition 15 crew and spent 152 days on board the International Space Station. Anderson eventually retired from NASA in January 2013 after serving 15 years. In May 2022 he became the president and CEO of the Strategic Air Command & Aerospace Museum, a museum in his hometown of Ashland.



Three tips to get a more restful night's sleep

There is no magic formula to ensure long-term health. However, if there were such an equation, sleep would be a critical component. Though adults may be able to function with less sleep than doctors recommend, the National Institutes of Health note that consistent lack of sufficient sleep can interfere with work, social functioning and driving ability.

The National Institute on Aging notes that adults of all ages generally need the same amount of sleep, typically between seven and nine hours of rest per night.

That's an important distinction, as busy adults in mid-life might feel as though they can operate on less sleep without adversely affecting their overall health. However, in addition to the problems noted by the NIH, the NIA reports that ongoing lack of sleep, or even consistently poor sleep quality, can increase risk for cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, and obesity.

Adults who feel their sleep quality is poor or those who aspire to sleep more

each night can consider these three strategies to ensure a more restful night's sleep.

1. Keep devices out of the bedroom

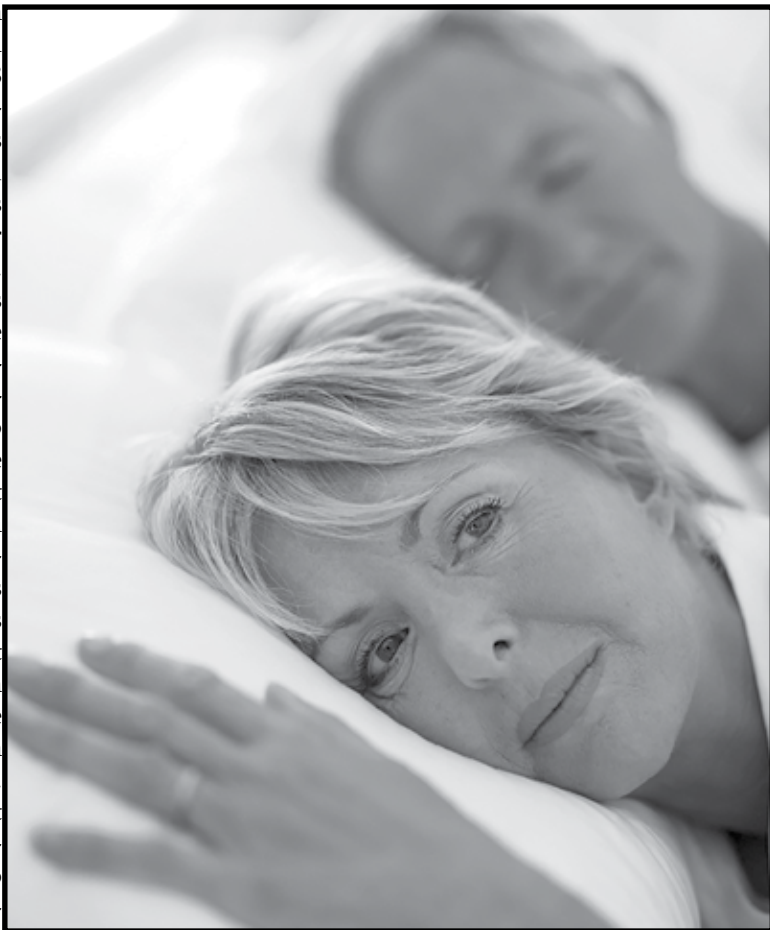
Screens are everywhere in modern life, and that includes the bedroom. In fact, the National Sleep Foundation's 2022 Sleep in America® Poll found that 58 percent of survey participants acknowledged looking at screens within an hour before bedtime. The NSF reports that device usage so close to bedtime can adversely affect sleep quality because the blue light emitted from screens has shorter wavelengths than other colors in the visible light spectrum, which results in more alertness than warmer tones. The blue light actually confuses the brain into thinking it's earlier in the day, thus making it harder to fall asleep.

2. Skip late afternoon naps

Short naps can help people reenergize, but the timing of naps could adversely affect how well people sleep at night. The Mayo Clinic notes that napping after 3 p.m. can make it harder to sleep soundly at night. And while short naps can provide a necessary jolt, it's important that naps be no longer than 30 minutes. Naps that exceed a half hour can contribute to feelings of grogginess and even compromise your ability to get restful sleep overnight.

3. Avoid alcohol

Some may consider alcohol a sleep aide, and there's good reason for that perception, even if it's misguided. Hackensack Meridian Health notes that alcohol acts as a depressant for the central nervous system that can cause brain activity to slow down. As a result, alco-



hol can increase feelings of relaxation and tiredness. However, that effect is not long-lasting, and as alcohol levels in the blood drop, individuals are likely to wake up and may even find it hard to fall back asleep. Waking up in the middle of the night cuts down on the time individuals spend in the most restorative stage of sleep, which is why individuals often feel as if they got little rest after a night of drinking.

Sleep is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. Some simple strategies may help adults get a more restful night's sleep.

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What to know about Age related macular degeneration

Physical changes are a normal byproduct of aging. Gray hairs and less elastic skin that contributes to wrinkles may be among the more notable physical signs of aging, but older individuals also may note their vision is not what it once was.

Diminished vision can be a byproduct of various conditions. Aging individuals who have noticed a loss of vision may be dealing with age-related macular degeneration, or AMD. Seniors concerned by AMD can learn about the condition so they're well-positioned to manage it if and when they need to.

What is AMD?

The National Eye Institute notes that AMD is an eye disease that is the leading cause of vision loss for older adults. In fact, Johns Hopkins Medicine notes age is the most common cause of severe loss of eyesight among people 50 and older. The NEI notes that aging causes damage to the macula, which is the part of the eye that controls sharp, straight-ahead vision. When a person has AMD, his or her central vision is blurred.

What happens when a person has AMD?

Because AMD blurs the central vision, people who develop the disease may struggle to recognize faces, read, drive, or engage in activities that require close-up work, including cooking or fixing

things around the house.

Are all cases of AMD the same?

The NEI notes that AMD happens very slowly in some people and faster in others. Some people may not recognize they have vision loss even when they already have early AMD. In addition, there are two types of AMD:

- Dry AMD: Dry AMD is the most common type of the disease and occurs as the macula gets thinner with age. Dry AMD progresses slowly over several years, and occurs in three stages: early, intermediate and late.

- Wet AMD: Wet AMD is a less common form of late AMD that the NEI notes typically causes faster vision loss. Wet AMD occurs when abnormal blood vessels grow in the back of the eye and damage the macula. Wet AMD is treatable.

Does AMD produce symptoms?

AMD produces different symptoms depending on the stage of the disease. Early dry AMD does not cause any symptoms, and the NEI notes some people with intermediate dry AMD may not experience symptoms. Those who do may notice symptoms such as mild blurriness in their central vision or difficulty seeing in low lighting. Late wet or dry AMD patients may notice that straight lines are beginning to look wavy

or crooked and there may be a blurry area near the center of their vision. That blurriness can grow larger over time and people may begin to see blank spots. Colors also may seem less bright and people may have difficulty seeing in low lighting.

tory of AMD, Caucasians and smokers also have a higher risk of developing AMD. Quitting smoking, getting regular physical activity, maintaining healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and eating a healthy diet that includes leafy greens and fish are some ways



Who is at risk for AMD?

The NEI notes that adults over 55 are more likely to have AMD than any other group. People with a family his-

people can lower their AMD risk.

AMD is most common among individuals over 50. More information is available at nei.nih.gov.

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Financial strategies to consider as retirement draws near

Freedom is often cited as a benefit of retirement. Many professionals look forward to the day when they retire and have more free time and the freedom to spend that time however they choose. Of course, the opportunity to spend retirement how one sees fit typically requires considerable financial freedom.

Financial planning for retirement is often emphasized to young professionals beginning their careers. But it's equally important that people on the cusp of retirement continue to look for ways

to protect and grow their wealth. As retirement draws near, professionals can consider these strategies to ensure they have the financial freedom to make their golden years shine even brighter.

Plan to grow your wealth in retirement

It's widely assumed that retirees need less income after calling it a career because the need to save for retirement is no longer present. However, some expenses, including health care, may rise in retirement, which underscores the



need to continue growing your wealth. Cost-of-living also will increase over the course of your retirement years, which highlights the need to keep growing wealth in retirement. It can be tricky to protect your existing retirement savings as you approach the end of your career while also growing that wealth, so it is best to work with a financial planner to navigate that situation.

Maintain a mix with your investments


A model from the Schwab Center for Financial Research indicated that a hypothetical retiree with a \$2 million portfolio in year one of retirement will have slightly less than \$1 million left 30 years later if her portfolio maintains a mix of 60 percent stocks and 40 percent bonds and cash. The model found that a second hypothetical investor with the same size portfolio in year one of retirement will run out of funds prior to year 29 if his portfolio is 20 percent stocks and 80 percent bonds and cash. Though conventional wisdom suggests limiting risk as retirement nears and eliminating it entirely upon retiring, modern retirees are living longer and may therefore need to maintain a mix of investments to ensure they don't outlive their money.

Make the maximum

allowable contributions

Many aging professionals may not have saved as much for retirement as they might have hoped to upon starting their careers decades ago. In fact, a 2024 survey from Prudential Financial found that many 55-year-olds have fallen far short of establishing the level of financial security they will need in retirement. The Prudential survey found that 55-year-olds had a median retirement savings of less than \$50,000, a number that falls considerably short of the recommended goal of having eight times one's annual income saved by this age. If that situation sounds familiar for professionals nearing retirement age, then now is the time to begin catching up. Make the maximum allowable contributions to a 401(k) plan (\$23,000 in 2024) and/or an IRA (\$7,000). In addition, the Internal Revenue Service notes that IRA catch-up contributions remained \$1,000 for individuals age 50 and over in 2024.

Retirement can provide a sense of freedom professionals have worked hard to achieve over the course of their careers. Some simple strategies can help professionals on the cusp of retirement achieve the financial freedom they'll need to enjoy their golden years to the fullest extent.




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The importance of wellness exams after 50

Seniors are a growing and increasingly prosperous demographic. As the senior population increases, a greater emphasis must be placed on keeping aging individuals healthy. Wellness checks are important at any age, but they bear even more significance as individuals grow older.

Age brings with it many things, including experience and wisdom. But age also brings an increased risk for health problems. Aging men and women are vulnerable to chronic conditions like heart disease, COPD, cancer, and arthritis. It's noteworthy that many chronic health conditions fail to produce any symptoms until they have progressed to a point where treatment is difficult.

Annual wellness exams can help older adults take charge of their health and stay as healthy as possible. It's possible for a person to preserve his or her health (and possibly life) through check-ups and easy tests. Here are some common screenings and health recommendations that come up in the prime of one's life.

Colorectal cancer screening

A colon cancer screening is recommended for everyone at age 45. Colon cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States, and risk increases at age 45. Although people



seldom look forward to a colonoscopy and the required prep, putting off this test due to a little discomfort may result in missing colon cancer at its earliest stage when it is most treatable.

Cholesterol screening

This simple blood test can help evaluate the risk for heart disease. High cholesterol can contribute to the buildup of plaque in the arteries, making them narrower and less flexible, according to Sharecare, Inc.

Mammogram

Most health organizations recommend annual mammogram screenings from age 40 until menopause. Then it may be possible to have a mammogram every other year for those who are at average risk. It is important for women to discuss mammogram frequency with their doctors, particularly if there is a family history of breast cancer.

Diabetes

ChenMed says diabetes may be more

common in older adults, so regular screenings for this illness can enable early diagnosis and management.

Testicular cancer screening

This test generally is not recommended without symptoms. Some organizations suggest men with a family history or other risk factors consider performing self-examinations.

Vaccination needs

Doctors can alert patients to recommended vaccinations during wellness exams. Seniors should receive an annual flu shot and updated COVID-19 vaccination as available. Pneumococcal vaccine can protect against pneumococcal disease that can lead to pneumonia, meningitis and bloodstream infections. Adults over 50 also should receive a vaccination for shingles, which can occur in older age in those who have previously experienced chickenpox.

There are additional advantages to routine health checkups. Doctors can inquire about fitness routines, stress, sleep, and diet to see if patients are within the guidelines for healthy living.

Older age may make a person wiser, but the risk for various health issues and certain diseases increases with age. Routine health check-ups can keep doctors and patients on the same page.

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Strategies to manage and tame stress

Stress is a part of life. In small doses, stress can have a positive effect. But when stress is chronic, it can take its toll on the body and mind.



Stress can make people irritable and cause them to lash out at others. Stress also can contribute to high blood pressure and adversely affect sleep. When confronting chronic stress, individuals may have to take action to find relief.

These stress-busting strategies can help.

- **Engage in physical activity**

The Mayo Clinic says any form of exercise can help relieve stress. Physical activity boosts chemicals in the brain and endorphins that help a person feel good. Exercise also can refocus attention so a person is not preoccupied with a stressful thought or situation.

- **Listen to music**

Music can be calming and serve as a distraction from stressful feelings. Simply listening to music can be a quick fix for a stressful situation and a bad mood.

- **Review your**

lifestyle

It's easy to take on too much, but doing so can lead to feelings of being overwhelmed, says the Mental Health Foundation. Prioritizing some things over others and delegating when pos-

sible can tame stress.

- **Practice mindfulness**

Breathing and mindfulness exercises can be practiced anywhere. Research has shown that mindfulness can reduce the effects of stress and anxiety. Deep breathing and being in a quiet moment when stress peaks may help to reduce stress.

- **Step away for a few minutes**

If possible, step away from a stressful situation, whether it is a difficult project at work or a loud room with a lot of activity going on. Many people find commuting stressful. Changing the route to one that avoids busy roads, even if it takes a bit longer to get from point A to point B, might help.

- **Talk it out**

Sometimes connecting with others and sharing experiences can help to relieve stress. Keeping feelings in and fixating on a situation may exacerbate feelings of stress. Social situations that encourage talking and laughing can lighten a person's mental load, says the Mayo Clinic.

- **Don't turn to substances**

Alcohol and drugs may temporarily relieve stress, but this approach can lead to addiction and even worsen the physical and mental toll stress takes on the body.

Stress is a part of life, but finding ways to manage chronic stress is vital to long-term health.

Did you know: Glaucoma

Glaucoma is an umbrella term used to characterized a group of eye diseases that can gradually diminish individuals' vision and eventually lead to blindness. The National Eye Institute says the symptoms are a result of damage to the optic nerve due to increased intraocular pressure. Treatments designed to reduce eye pressure can help to prevent further damage but will not reverse what already has occurred. Glaucoma can occur at any age, but it is much more common in older adults. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates all people over the age of 60 have a higher risk of developing glaucoma. Glaucoma also is more common among Black people over the age of 40. The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends a more frequent eye exam schedule as individuals age to increase chances of early detection. People 65 and older should see an eye professional every two years, if not every year.



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Fitness regimens for those 50+

Fitness is an important component of overall wellness. Indeed, staying active has been linked to a number of noteworthy benefits, including decreased disease



risk and improved mental health.

Routine exercise helps a person burn calories and maintain a healthy weight. Tufts Medicine says weight gain is common among aging individuals, with both men and women tending to put on weight in their mid-sections. Weight

gain is a risk factor for diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Older adults may need to step up their fitness regimens to combat growing waistlines.

Staying active also can help with muscle and bone density, which can decline with age. The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons says exercise is important for maintaining bone strength as the body ages. Strength-training exercises put stress on bones so they can make bones stronger.

Now that it is apparent why fitness is key during senior years, it's time to explore some routines that may be best for people age 50 and older.

Yoga

Yoga is a low-impact practice that improves muscle strength, balance, mobility, and flexibility. All of these factors are important for seniors. For those who find that conventional forms of yoga are too taxing on joints and bones, chair yoga is a lower-impact form of the exercise.

Cycling

Riding a bike is a cardiovascular workout that offers a wide range of benefits. Most people find riding a bike is easy on the joints, and regular cycling can increase muscle strength and enhance flexibility. The pace and intensity of rides can be customized depending on riders' speed and the routes they ride.

Pilates

Joseph Pilates developed an exercise routine that now bears his name in the early twentieth century. Pilates emphasizes core strength and stability, but works all the major muscle groups in the body. Since it is another low-impact exercise, it can be suitable for people

with joint issues.

Body weight exercises

As individuals age, they may find that working with dumbbells, barbells or weight equipment at the gym is too taxing. Using body weight to build strength is a low-intensity option. Squats, wall push-ups, chair push-ups, and resistance bands can be used to build strength.

Walking

Walking is an unsung hero in the fit-

ness realm. According to Better Health Channel, just 30 minutes of walking every day can increase cardiovascular fitness, strengthen bones, reduce excess body fat, and boost muscle power and endurance. Walking is low-impact and less taxing on joints than jogging or running.

Seniors have a host of options to stay active as they navigate their changing fitness needs.

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Do sleep needs change as adults grow older?

Adults know much about their health changes as they grow older, but health experts note that sleep requirements generally remain the same throughout adulthood. According to the National Institute on Aging, older adults need roughly the same amount of sleep as all adults. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that the recommended amount of sleep for adults is at least seven hours each day, and various organizations recommend adults get between seven and nine hours of sleep per night. Those recommendations can promote optimal health into one's golden years, but that advice is not being heeded by a significant portion of the adult population. The CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) tracked the sleeping habits of men and women between 2013 and 2022 and ultimately found that 37.5 percent of men and 36 percent of women were not getting enough sleep during that time period. The percentage of individuals not getting enough sleep was particularly high among adults between the ages of 39 and 64, among whom nearly four in 10 were falling short of the recommended daily amount of sleep.

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What adults should know about alcohol consumption after 50

Patients are asked several routine questions during annual wellness exams. Among those queries are a subsection of questions regarding alcohol consumption. Doctors ask these questions to iden-



tify how much alcohol their patients consume and how often they drink. It's important that patients of all ages answer such questions honestly, and that includes men and women over 50.

Binge drinking may not be a behavior people associate with individuals over 50, but this behavior is on the rise among aging men and women. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) defines binge drinking as a pattern of alcohol consumption that elevates an individual's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 percent or higher. The NIAAA notes that such levels correspond to consuming five or more drinks (male) or four or more drinks (female) in a roughly two-hour period. Data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health indicates that one in five adults between the ages of 60 and 64 and 12 percent of individuals age 65 and over report current binge drinking.

Binge drinking trends among indi-

viduals 60 and over alarm public health officials. The NIAAA notes that older adults are vulnerable to various problems when drinking alcohol, which can lead to bad interactions among people

taking medications and increase risk for various health ailments. Such a reality makes it worth aging adults' time to learn some of the basics of alcohol consumption after 50.

Alcohol can exacerbate various medical conditions

Age is a notable risk factor for various medical conditions. For example, the National Institute on Aging notes that changes in the heart and blood vessels that occur naturally with age may increase a person's risk of heart disease and related health problems. The NIAAA notes that adding alcohol to the mix as you age can worsen problems such as high blood pressure and congestive heart failure. Additional conditions that can be exacerbated by heavy drinking include diabetes, liver problems, osteoporosis, and mood disorders.

Alcohol can interact with various medications

Prescription medications come with a lengthy rundown of warnings and

instructions, which is enough to compel many people to avoid alcohol when taking such medicines. However, people may not be as careful with over-the-counter medications, even though the NIAAA warns that mixing alcohol with OTC medicines can be dangerous and even deadly. OTC medications such as aspirin, acetaminophen, allergy medicines, and sleeping pills can interact badly with alcohol.

Alcohol consumption should be limited to two drinks or less

As noted, a significant percentage of adults over 60 qualify as binge drinkers. That may alarm some older adults who do not feel as though they have a problem with alcohol but still meet the qualifications for binge drinking.

Refraining from alcohol is arguably the safest option, but individuals over 50 who still like to enjoy a drink every now and then are urged to keep their consumption to two drinks or less in a day for men and one drink or less in a day for women. It's important that individuals recognize they cannot save up drinking for one night of the week. So those who abstain six days a week cannot then consume between seven and 14 drinks on the day they drink. Such an approach is unhealthy, unsafe and potentially deadly.

Adults over 50 are urged to learn about the ways alcohol affects aging bodies. More information is available at niaaa.nih.gov.

The impact of reading on cognitive decline

Aging and change go hand in hand. Although some may bemoan the gray hairs that start to arrive or stiffness in the knees that seems to sneak up on a person in middle age, such concerns are not necessarily enough to lose sleep over. However, many people 50 or older are nervous about the potential for cognitive issues like dementia as they grow older.

The Alzheimer's Association estimates that 6.7 million people have Alzheimer's disease in the United States. The Alzheimer Society of Canada estimates that there were 733,040 people living with dementia in the country as of January 1, 2024. Alzheimer's disease and other dementias can rob people of their memories, personalities and abilities to live satisfying, independent lives. While it may not be impossible to prevent all cognitive issues completely, there is reason to believe that reading could be an ally in cognitive care.


The American Academy of Neurology says that reading stimulates the brain and has been shown to slow down cognitive decline in old age. Reading also may help slow down memory loss.

The powers of reading were noticed

more than 10 years ago when a 2013 study from researchers at Emory University measured readers' MRI scans as they read books. They found the deeper readers went into a story, the more areas of their brains were activated. This activity remained elevated for several days after participants finished their books. The more a person reads, the stronger complex networks in the brain become.


Additional evidence that reading can help the brain was noted by researchers at the Texas A&M School of Public Health. A 2024 study suggests that older people with mild cognitive impairment who engage in high levels of activities like reading, hobbies and word games have better memory, working memory, attention, and processing speed than those who do not take part in such endeavors. Furthermore, a 2021 study published in *Neurology* found that high levels of cognitive activity, like reading and writing letters, can delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease by five years among those age 80 and over.

Reading can keep brains functioning optimally and potentially delay age-related cognitive decline.



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Four cozy cabin getaways at Nebraska state parks

Need to get away from it all? A cabin getaway at a Nebraska state park can be a great choice in winter, offering solitude, scenic surroundings, and the chance to relax, watch wildlife and spend time with loved ones.

The following four parks offer cabin lodging this time of year, as well as a seasonal discount. Guests pay 30% less Sunday to Thursday from October to April, excluding Fridays, Saturdays and holidays. The exception is Niobrara State Park; this park's discount rates began Dec. 1 and go through April 14.

Take your pick from the following options:

NIOBRARA STATE PARK

Situated at the confluence of the Niobrara and Missouri rivers on Nebraska's northeastern border, Niobrara State Park is a scenic, tranquil park. It becomes even more serene in winter; park superintendent Cogan Thompson said it's his favorite time to be at the park.

"The solitude is the biggest selling point for our cabins during the winter months," Thompson said. "You're not going to hear any noise, any traffic."

Eight of the park's cabins remain open during the winter; five have three bedrooms, while the rest have two bedrooms.

rooms. These modern cabins are fully furnished and feature a full kitchen and living room, as well as a screened back porch.

Aside from snuggling indoors, park

wildlife like deer, turkeys and birds.

For Valentine's Day, guests can enjoy early check-in, late check-out and a complimentary package from local businesses for a minimum two-night stay, Feb.



The mini lodges at Ponca State Park in Dixon County are a popular winter getaway.

visitors can also enjoy sledding on the park's numerous hills and watching

7-8 or 14-15. Spaces are limited; call the park at 402-857-3373 to book your stay.

LEWIS AND CLARK STATE RECREATION AREA

The cabins at this park in northeastern Nebraska are situated along Lewis and Clark Lake, Nebraska's second largest reservoir. While the lakefront views are great in the warmer months, in winter, the lake freezes over, offering a unique perspective.

"The view is the main thing our guests like," said park superintendent Leslie Donner. "Past visitors have seen wildlife like coyotes running across the lake."

Five cabins stay open at the park in winter. These modern, two-bedroom cabins are fully furnished and offer a covered patio, modern restrooms, picnic table, outdoor grill and campfire ring. They sleep seven, with two queen beds and three single beds. Their classic log cabin look makes them a favorite with visitors.

"You get that rustic outdoor feeling, with the amenities of home," Donner said.

Call the park at 402-388-4169 to learn more and make your reservation.

PONCA STATE PARK

This park in northeastern Nebraska offers a range of winter lodging, includ-

See PARKS, page 3B



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Parks

(Continued from page 2B)

ing 15 mini lodges, 10 cottages and two green cabins. The most popular in winter are the mini lodges, said park superintendent J.R. Kantor.



In winter, the lakefront cabins at Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area in Knox County feature a unique view. “People like them because they have almost all the same accommodations as your own house,” he said. Each mini lodge includes two full

bathrooms, a spacious kitchen, living room, patio, big screen TV, cable, wireless internet, wood fireplace and gas grill. They include four bedrooms and plenty of space for a group. For a smaller group, the two-bedroom cottages may be a great pick. And for those looking for an eco-friendly getaway, check out the green cabins. These two-bedroom cabins use straw for insulation and geothermal heating and cooling, among other features. Those who rent cabins in winter, especially in February, can look forward to a secluded getaway. “It’s a perfect time to come out to the park,” Kantor said. “There’s a really good chance if you rent a cabin, you have almost the entire park to yourself.” During your stay, explore on your own or check out the park events and naturalist activities each weekend, which range from wildlife track identification to birding, guided hikes and snowshoeing, ice-fishing and more. When the snow gets heavy, participate in the snow creature building contest and cross-country skiing.

PLATTE RIVER STATE PARK
Nestled halfway between Lincoln and Omaha, Platte River State Park is conveniently located for a winter getaway. The most popular choices for winter lodging here are the buildings with fireplaces, which include five cabins and two mini lodges. The park’s three glamping cabins are also popular in winter. Mini lodges include all the comforts of home and have four bedrooms, two bathrooms, a large kitchen and dining room, dishwasher and fireplace. Meanwhile, the glamping cabins are perfect for couples, offering polished concrete floors, a raised stone fire pit and many windows to let in the natural sunlight. Park superintendent Adam Johns said that visitors enjoy winter stays at the park because of the quietness and the wildlife watching opportunities, which include deer, turkey, birds, and the occasional coyote, fox and raccoon. Some

See PARKS, page 4B

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Alzheimer’s Association Nebraska Chapter calls for greater awareness and advocacy in Black Communities During Black History Month

During Black History Month, the Alzheimer’s Association Nebraska Chapter emphasizes the urgent need for advocacy and awareness in Black communities, which continue to be disproportionately affected by Alzheimer’s and other dementias.

According to the Alzheimer’s Association 2024 Facts and Figures report, older Black Americans are almost twice as likely as older white individuals to be living with Alzheimer’s or another form of dementia—yet they are less likely to receive a diagnosis. This disparity

highlights systemic barriers in health-care access, research participation, and support services for underrepresented and underserved communities.

“Alzheimer’s is a public health crisis that significantly affects Black communities, yet access to timely diagnoses, high-quality care, and vital support remains uneven,” said Sadie Hinkel, Programming Director of the Alzheimer’s Association Nebraska Chapter. “During Black History Month and beyond, we are committed to amplifying Black voices, addressing health

disparities, and working toward a future where every individual impacted by Alzheimer’s has access to the care and support they deserve.”

Key findings from the Alzheimer’s Association report these challenges:

- Only 20% of Black Americans report facing no barriers to excellent healthcare and support for Alzheimer’s or other dementias.

- 65% of Black Americans say they personally know someone with Alzheimer’s or another dementia.

- Only 53% of Black Americans believe a cure for Alzheimer’s will be distributed fairly across all racial and ethnic groups.

To continue this vital conversation, the Alzheimer’s Association Nebraska Chapter invites the community to join an informative webinar:

Navigating Brain Health Beyond Black History Month

Hosted by the Black/ African American Community Impact Group

It will be held Friday, Feb. 28 at 12 p.m. CT

The event is open to the public.

Register Here: https://alz-org.zoom.us/join/register/WN_sAwdDMT-FQoysIG7Qlq2ExQ#/registration

This webinar will explore brain health, care navigation, and community engagement while providing actionable steps and resources to support well-being in Black communities.

Parks

(Continued from page 3B)

visitors bring their own pinecone bird feeders and bird seed.

“They just like sitting inside, or on the porch, drinking hot coffee or hot cocoa and watching the birds and deer,” Johns said. “We have a few people, as soon as it starts snowing, who call and reserve a cabin and come out to enjoy the peace and quiet.”

Many others will make reservations for Valentine’s Day and stay to enjoy a steak dinner at the park’s Walter Scott Jr. Lodge Restaurant.

When you book your stay, note that a two-night minimum stay is required, as well as a park entry permit. To learn more, make a reservation and buy a park entry permit, visit OutdoorNebraska.gov.

2025 Fishing Forecast, Guide now available

Explore Nebraska Game and Parks’ 2025 Fishing Forecast and 2025 Fishing Guides to help plan your next fishing trip — no matter the season.

These two resources are available to download at OutdoorNebraska.gov or print copies can be found at retailers where fishing permits are sold.

Increase your odds of fishing success by reviewing Nebraska fishing regulations and researching locations in our 2025 Fishing Guide, or seeking the best water bodies for top-size sportfish in our 2025 Fishing Forecast.

The Fishing Guide is a summary of regulations and orders and includes a section detailing the state’s public fishing areas. The Fishing Forecast provides a look at where some of the best fishing, and maybe some of the biggest fish, may be found in Nebraska based on 2024 lake sampling.

Find additional planning tools, such as the fish stocking database, lake contour maps, and other fishing publications — or buy your annual fishing permit — at OutdoorNebraska.gov; search for “Fishing guides and reports.”



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