

Healthy Aging and Your Brain

Stanford Alzheimer's Disease Research Center

Healthy Lifestyle Choices Help You Maintain a Healthy Body and Brain

Alzheimer's Disease is a buildup of harmful proteins in the brain, the death of brain cells, and loss of connections among them.

Known risks:

- Age
- Family History
- Genes

Suspected risks:

- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure at mid-life that continues and is poorly controlled
- Lack of physical activity

What are some healthy choices you can make that don't involve medications?

Take care of your physical health.

- Know your numbers: Blood pressure, Cholesterol, Blood sugar
- Get recommended health screenings & consult your doctor to make sure your medicines are right for you
- Manage health problems like diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol
- Reduce risk for brain injuries due to falls and other types of accidents

Be Active. Physical Activity:

- Reduces risks of diabetes, heart disease, depression, and stroke
- Prevents falls
- Stimulates blood flow in the brain; Improves connections among brain cells
- Goal: 150 minutes of exercise each week; or 30 minutes a day
- Join programs that can help you learn to move safely
- Check with your health care provider if you haven't been active and want to start an exercise program

For more information contact the Stanford ADRC at:

Web: <http://med.stanford.edu/adrc.html>

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Improve your Diet.

- The MIND Diet

Keep your Mind Active.

- Do mentally stimulating activities (e.g., read books and magazines; play games; learn new things)
- Take or teach a class
- Be social through work or volunteering

Stay connected with family, friends, and communities

- People who do meaningful activities, like volunteering, say they feel happier and healthier.
- Social activities are linked to reduced risk for some health problems, including dementia.
- Join in social and other programs through your senior center or other community organizations

Be mindful of your mood

- Depression = feelings of sadness or loss of interest in favored activities that last for weeks at a time
- Not a normal part of aging
- Some medicines can cause depression
- Confusion or attention problems caused by depression can sometimes look like dementia
- Depression can be treated with appropriate medication and/or psychological counseling (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy – CBT)

Researchers at Stanford University and other research centers across the globe have found that these factors in combination have the greatest impact on reducing the likelihood of developing dementia, or slowing its progression if it is already present.

What can you do today?

Pick one thing you can do to help your brain!

Take small first steps! Examples:

- Take a 10-minute walk a few times every day
- Add 2 -4 servings of vegetables & fruits each day
- Make an appt for health screenings or a physical exam

Write down what you will do and when: make a commitment to do all that you can do!

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