

Dementia prevention: You are not alone



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September is Dementia Awareness Month, an initiative of Alzheimer's Australia.

The theme for this year's campaign is 'You are not alone,'

encouraging Australians to become aware of issues surrounding dementia, have a better understanding of what it is like for a person to live with dementia and create more supportive communities for people with dementia.

Dementia is a condition that affects a person's thinking, behaviour and ability to perform everyday tasks. It comes in many forms, greatly impacting individuals and their loved ones. Dementia is an umbrella term that describes a collection of symptoms, not one specific disease; there are over 100 different causes of dementia. The most common causes are Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia and dementia with Lewy bodies.

Dementia prevention

To maintain a healthy brain, you must look after your whole body, especially your heart. The earlier you start to look after yourself the better, it's best to start before changes start to occur in the brain which is often in middle age.

There are a number of ways to keep a healthy brain reducing your risk of developing dementia:

1. Heart Health

Since vascular dementia is the second most common type of dementia, it is important to look after your cardiovascular system. You need healthy blood vessels and good blood flow around the body and to the brain. If you have inflamed or damaged arteries and/or high blood pressure, you are at higher risk of vascular dementia.

2. Movement

You need to move your body; sitting is now being called "the new smoking". Studies are now revealing that sitting for long periods of time, whether in front of the TV or at a desk is very detrimental to your health. Those sitting for long periods

of time have a nearly 50 percent increased risk of death from any cause and about a 125 percent increased risk of events associated with cardiovascular disease.

Movement is important to control your blood sugar levels, keep your muscles and bones strong enough to carry your body, eliminate toxins from your body and encourage a healthy heart and healthy circulation.

3. Use it or lose it

Mentally challenge your brain, learn something new. Learning allows you to build new brain cells and strengthen connections between them.

4. Stay connected

Results recently published on a 75-year study on what makes a good life found that people who are more socially connected to family, to friends, to community, are happier, they're physically healthier, and they live longer than people who are less well connected. Loneliness is toxic, people who are more isolated than they want to be from others find that they are less happy, their health declines earlier in midlife, their brain functioning declines sooner and they live shorter lives than people who are not lonely. Good relationships are protective to your brain so nurture good relationships/friendships.

5. Manage your stress

We all know that stress affects our memory, long term chronic stress can have a very detrimental effect on your brain. Stress also drives inflammation, insulin resistance and cardiovascular disease which can all contribute to dementia. We can't always change what happens in life but we can choose how we respond to those events.

6. Eat for brain and heart health

Foods to include: Avocados, cold pressed extra virgin olive oil, oily fish, eggs, grass fed beef, chicken, walnuts, sunflower seeds, pepitas, fresh beetroot, loads of greens and blueberries.

What to avoid: Reduce packaged foods high in refined carbohydrates (muffins, biscuits, cakes, pies, ready-made meals, confectionary etc) Also be aware of how much sugar is in your diet. The World Health Organisation recommend we limit our sugar consumption to no more

than six teaspoons per day to maintain good health (for adults). Sugar is in many packaged foods and sauces, read the label 4g is 1 teaspoon. High amounts of sugar in the diet can lead to inflammation, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and insulin resistance which can all contribute to dementia. David Perlmutter, Neurologist (author of Brain Maker), believes that sugar can and does damage the brain.

It is really important that you learn to control your blood sugar levels and prevent insulin resistance and type II diabetes which are lifestyle diseases that can be avoided with the right diet

and lifestyle. Dementia is now being called Type 3 diabetes by some medical specialists due to the strong connection between blood sugar regulation and dementia.

People who drink too much alcohol are at risk of dementia and also at risk of severe B vitamin deficiencies which permanently damage the brain. Smoking also is a big contributor to dementia.

We can't control the genes we inherit but we can have a big influence on whether those genes turn on or off with our diet and lifestyle!

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Movement and staying active is one of the ways people can get proactive about dementia prevention.

The Hawkesbury Independent does not recommend the self management of health problems.

All specific medical questions should be presented to your own health care provider, as with any questions or concerns you may have regarding your individual needs and any medical conditions. Always consult a medical professional before starting a fitness program or changing your diet. Information found in the

Independent is meant to support and not replace the relationship with your doctor.

You should never follow suggestions in the Independent that are inconsistent with prescriptions, requirements or recommendations provided by your own doctor.

You should never disregard medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read here.

If you believe you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor or 000 immediately.

Worried about your risk of dementia?
Want help with strategies for prevention?
Not sure what to eat/do to for your brain?

Our Nutritionists can help you to reduce inflammation, correct your blood sugar levels and feed your brain the nutrients it requires for health.

GET HELP FROM THE EXPERTS TODAY!

**Call now to book an
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