

Reducing Risk for Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD)

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Dementia is not a specific disease, but an umbrella term used to describe significant cognitive impairment that impacts an individual’s ability to function day to day.

Cognitive impairment can include issues with remembering, problem solving, making decisions, paying attention, misplacing items, finding words, and repeating conversations to name a few. While there are many types of dementia, including Alzheimer’s disease, which is most common, dementia is **NOT** part of normal aging.

You can support brain health and lower your risk of dementia by taking steps to:

1 Optimize Medical Conditions

- Manage chronic illnesses (diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol)
- Get a sleep study and treat sleep apnea if present
- Address hearing or vision impairments
- Identify and promptly treat any mental health conditions (symptoms of depression overlap considerably with symptoms of cognitive decline)
- Reduce stroke risk by maintaining normal blood pressure

2 Practice Brain-Healthy Lifestyle Habits

- Maintain and make new social connections
- Get good quality sleep (7-9 hours each night)
- Keep an active lifestyle (2.5 hours of physical activity each week)
- Eat nutritious brain-healthy foods (MIND diet)
- Keep the brain engaged and challenged every day
- Reduce alcohol consumption and avoid daily use
- Obtain complete tobacco cessation
- Use helpful tools to maintain your functioning and independence (hearing aids, glasses, physical therapy, assistive mobility devices)

3 Prevent Injury and Detect Changes Early

- Schedule a routine annual wellness visit with your primary care provider
- Complete PCP recommended preventative care screenings
- Complete an annual cognitive screening, especially with family history of ADRD
- Reduce fall risk in your home with good lighting, railings, grab bars, clutter-free spaces and supportive footwear
- Take medications safely and consistently
 - know what you are taking and why
 - ask about reducing any unnecessary medications
 - use pillbox, checklist, reminders, family support to keep track
 - follow instructions for dose and time
 - do not stop abruptly or without talking to your prescriber
- Identify and treat sudden onset of confusion or memory loss
 - dementia is a gradual disease process and does not happen overnight
 - sudden changes could be a sign of infection or illness that requires medical treatment

Ultimate Goal: Improve Overall Brain Health

Motor functioning how well you move your body and keep your balance	Sensory functioning how well you use your senses, such as seeing, hearing, tasting, and smelling	Tactile functioning how well you process touch, pressure, temperature, and texture	Cognitive functioning how well you think, learn, remember, and solve problems	Emotional functioning how well you understand and respond to your feelings and the feelings of others
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