

LOWER YOUR DEMENTIA RISK

4 PROVEN STEPS FOR SMART AGING



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WELCOME



Talk with your doctor about your power to protect memory.

MORE THAN 40% Estimated increase in the number of Americans with Alzheimer's disease, one form of dementia, in the next decade.

CONCERNED ABOUT MEMORY LOSS? You're not alone. When a major university polled 2,678 people about their biggest health fears, Alzheimer's disease was second only to cancer. And a survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that one in eight adults age 60 and older had recently noticed more memory loss or confusion.

It's common to experience memory slips and the occasional brain fog as you get older, but dementia is not a natural part of the aging process, says Constantine Lyketsos, M.D. In fact, there are some simple but powerful steps you can follow to help keep your brain strong. So don't wait and worry—take action with the expert recommendations throughout these pages.



MEET OUR EXPERT

CONSTANTINE LYKETSOS, M.D.
Director of the Memory and Alzheimer's Treatment Center at Johns Hopkins

ENJOY A HEALTHY DIET

A healthy brain needs a healthy heart. That's because cognitive function is impacted when blood flow to the brain is interrupted, slowed or blocked, says Lyketsos. Research has found that a Mediterranean-style diet may lower your risk of heart attack, stroke and Alzheimer's disease while boosting your brain's functioning. The Mediterranean diet isn't a strict diet per se—it's simply guidelines that provide plenty of choices and variety.

GO FOR GOOD-FOR-YOU (UNSATURATED) FATS.

Nuts, olive oil and avocado are good sources. Limit saturated fats, which come primarily from animal sources (like butter and red meat). Opt for 1 percent or skim milk and dairy products, rather than 2 percent or whole

milk. Avoid trans fats altogether. On processed food labels, watch for the words "partially hydrogenated oils" and skip those foods.

STAY LEAN WITH PROTEIN.

Beans provide important fiber as well as protein. Fatty fish, like salmon, trout and tuna, contain good-for-you omega-3 polyunsaturated fats. Limit red meat to lean cuts and serve it in side-dish-sized portions.

CHOOSE CARBS

CAREFULLY. Choose carbs from whole-grain sources (such as oatmeal or whole wheat bread) rather than processed and refined carbs (such as white bread and white rice). Read labels to avoid added sugar, a common source of extra carbs.

LOVE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.

Aim for a wide variety of plant foods. Dark-green leafy vegetables—such as spinach, kale, lettuce, Swiss chard, collard greens, arugula and broccoli—are especially smart choices for their fiber and antioxidants.



Mediterranean Lunch Makeover

Try a salmon fillet over a bed of salad greens, with whole-grain bread and a low-fat yogurt on the side.



GET MOVING



Enjoy fitness
for your heart
and brain.

Studies show that moderate to intense physical exercise done regularly can reduce the risk of dementia by up to 50 percent. Staying active likely works by increasing blood flow to the brain and improving the brain's use of oxygen and glucose, as well as building denser blood vessels in the brain. Some types of exercise may also help because they require you to concentrate—for example, learning new (sometimes complex) movements and keeping count of repetitions or interval times.

Many people find both pleasure and success simply by walking—gradually working up to 10,000 steps per day, measured by a fitness tracking device or app. “Walking is a great exercise for brain health,” says Lyketsos. Where to start?

SLOWLY STEP IT UP.

Most inactive people generally walk about 2,500 to 3,000 steps a day. A good strategy is to try to increase your number of daily steps by 500 each week until you reach 10,000 a day.

THINK ABOUT MOVEMENT THAT YOU TRULY ENJOY.

Dancing? Playing a team sport? Walking and talking with a friend? If you find an activity you like, you'll be more likely to stick with it.

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE.

Remember, any type of physical activity that gets your body moving and your heart pumping will bring better health. Everyday things like doing chores, walking the dog and climbing stairs count too.

DID YOU KNOW?

Evidence shows that taking 10,000 steps a day supports brain health.

Playing music can strengthen memory.



FLEX YOUR MENTAL MUSCLE

Studies have found that people who remain intellectually active are less likely to develop dementia. The idea is to keep the parts of the brain you typically use active, but also to engage parts of your brain you've never used. For example, it may help to increase the complexity of books you're reading or learn a new language. What else helps?

GO BEYOND PUZZLES.

"Doing crosswords and other puzzles is a form of memory training. People can improve their memory by doing those sorts of things," Lyketsos says. However, a puzzle will only strengthen the type of memory it uses. So don't stop there.

TURN TO MUSIC.

Learning to play an instrument can help safeguard your brainpower by putting multiple parts of your brain to work, Lyketsos says. In a 2013 study, a group of adults age 60 and older took piano lessons and practiced the instrument daily for four months. Afterward, tests showed that they had improvements in their thinking ability. They also had less depression—a common problem that can hamper memory.

GO BACK TO SCHOOL.

From adult education classes housed at the local high school

to auditing college courses to being a student or teacher in a short noncredit program, you can challenge your brain and expand your social horizons at the same time. Try something you are likely to find enjoyable but that is a bit out of your comfort zone.

ABOUT 25%

Retirees who plan to continue working, whether as a volunteer, a part-time employee or a new small-business owner, according to a national survey.

Knitting strong social connections is important for your brain health.



STAY SOCIALLY ENGAGED

You can help keep your mind sharp by staying social, Lyketsos says. Staying connected with loved ones and the greater community can get more difficult as you age, if you live far from family or don't drive as much as you used to. But it's important to make the effort, he says.

MOVE INTO COMMUNITY.

"People dread moving out of their homes, but retirement communities have a built-in social connection," beneficial if you're otherwise isolated, says Lyketsos.

SHARE A HOBBY. Join a knitting club. Take a woodworking

class. Dust off your violin and join a community orchestra.

VOLUNTEER. In some studies, older people who volunteer say their health is better.

CONNECT WITH YOUR FAITH COMMUNITY.

It can be a supportive, encouraging and meaningful environment, and there are usually a lot of social opportunities, from coffee hour to clubs.

GET HEARING HELP.

A study by Johns Hopkins and the National Institute on Aging

suggests that hearing loss could increase the risk of dementia. Hearing loss may contribute to faster brain atrophy. It also contributes to social isolation—you may not want to be with people as much, and when you are you may not engage in conversation as much. In any case, hearing aids are no-risk therapies that can improve quality of life—including your connections.

1 IN 3

Number of older adults who say they feel lonely, according to a national survey.