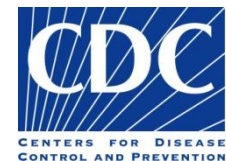


Brain Health As You Age: You Can Make a Difference!



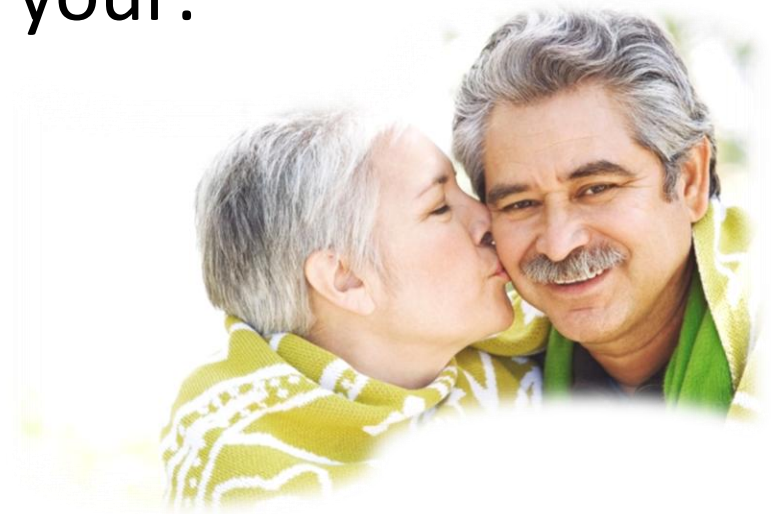
A presentation by:



Aging and Health

- Aging well depends on your:

- Genes
- Environment
- Lifestyle



- Healthy lifestyle choices may help you maintain a healthy body and brain

Preventing cognitive Decline and Dementia: A Way Forward

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcFdAVrYfns&t=301s>

Age-Related Changes in Memory and Learning

You may find:

- Increased difficulty finding words
- More problems in multi-tasking
- Mild decreases in ability to pay attention



You can still:

- Learn new things
- Create new memories
- Improve vocabulary and language skills

Possible Risks or Threats to Brain Health

- Some medicines, or improper use of them
- Smoking
- Excessive use of alcohol
- Heart disease, diabetes, and other health problems
- Poor diet
- Insufficient sleep
- Lack of physical activity
- Little social activity and being alone most of the time

Medicines and Brain Health

Some medicines – and combinations of them – can affect your thinking and the way your brain works.



Talk with your health care provider about the drugs you take and possible side effects on memory, sleep and brain function.

Smoking and Brain Health

- Benefits of quitting smoking at any age:
 - Lower risk of heart attacks, stroke, and lung disease
 - Better blood circulation
 - Not exposing others to second-hand smoke

There are free resources available to help you quit smoking.



Alcohol's Effect on Brain Health

- Slow or impaired communication among brain cells, even with moderate use
- Poor driving, slurred speech, fuzzy memory, drowsiness, dizziness
- Long-term changes to balance, memory and emotions, coordination, and body temperature



Staying away from alcohol can reverse some changes.

Some medicines can be dangerous when mixed with alcohol.

Common Conditions that Affect Brain Health

- Heart disease, high blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Alzheimer's disease
- Stroke
- Traumatic brain injury
- Depression
- Sleep problems

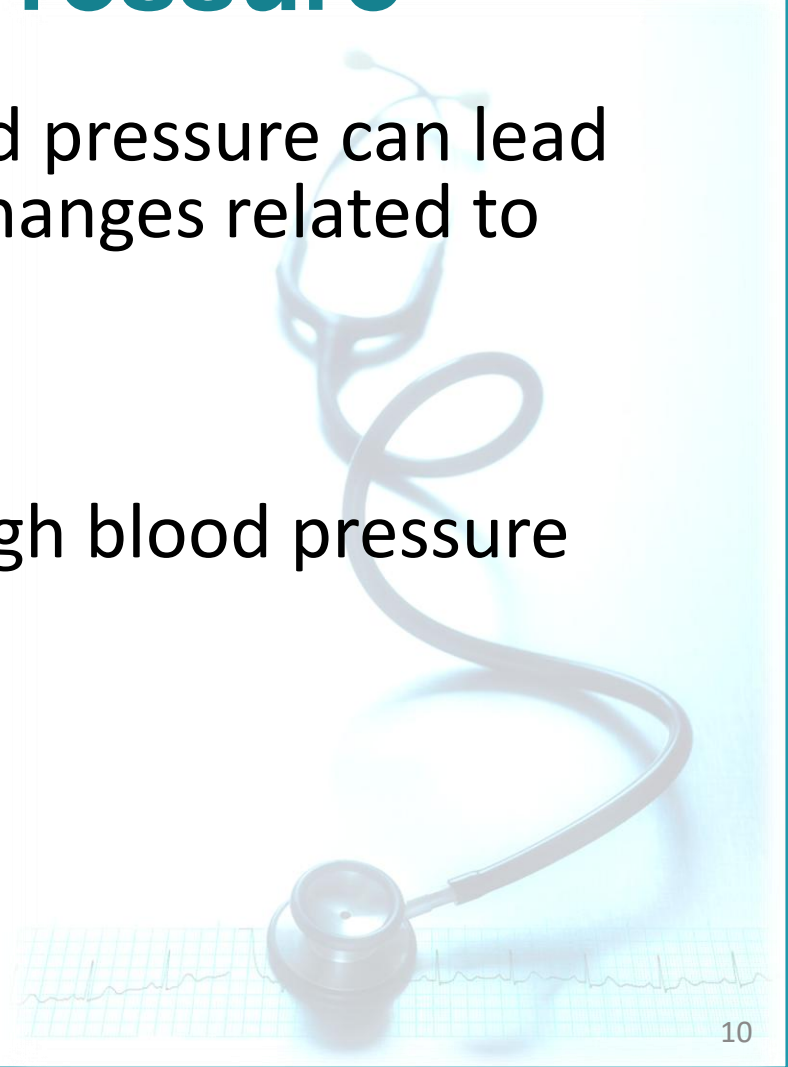


Heart Disease and High Blood Pressure

Heart disease and high blood pressure can lead to stroke and blood vessel changes related to dementia.

How to reduce risk:

- Control cholesterol and high blood pressure
- Exercise
- Eat healthy foods
- Quit smoking
- Limit use of alcohol



Diabetes

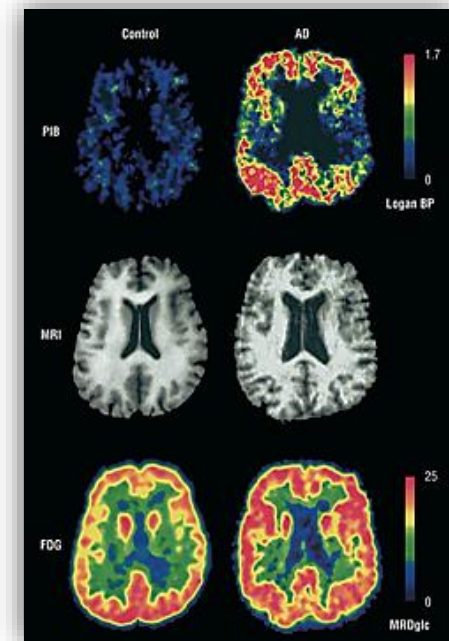
- Damages blood vessels throughout your body, including your brain
- Increases risk for stroke and heart attack
- May increase risk for memory problems and Alzheimer's disease
- Maintaining a healthy weight through physical activity and healthy eating can prevent or control diabetes

Talk with your health care provider about the combination of lifestyle and medicine that works for you.

Alzheimer's Disease

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

- Known risks:
 - Age
 - Genes, in some people
 - Head injury
- Suspected risks:
 - Heart disease
 - High blood pressure at mid-life
 - Lack of physical activity
 - Depression
 - Diabetes



Alzheimer's Disease

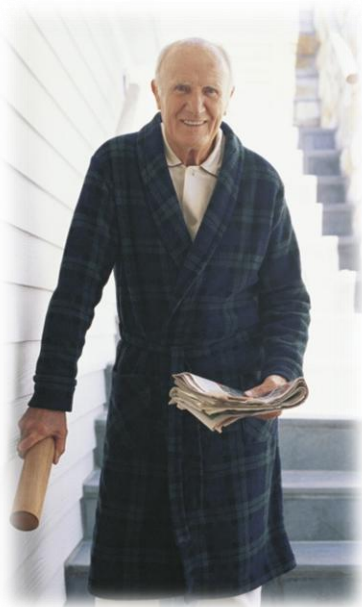
(continued)

- Some therapies can treat Alzheimer's symptoms. They do not slow down the disease's changes in the brain.
- Some approaches show promise in reducing risk of cognitive decline or Alzheimer's, but need more testing:
 - Exercise
 - Healthy diet
 - Controlling high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes
 - Cognitive “brain” training

Brain Injury

- Older adults are at higher risk of falling and other accidents that can cause brain injury

How to reduce risk:



- Exercise to improve balance and coordination
- Take a fall prevention class
- Make your home safer
- Review medicines and vision with your health care provider
- Wear safety belts and helmets
- Get enough sleep

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
- Treatment can involve therapy and medicine



Sleep Apnea

- Short pauses in breathing while sleeping
- Can lead to injury, high blood pressure, stroke, or memory loss, all of which can affect brain health
- Treatment begins with lifestyle changes, such as avoiding alcohol, losing weight, and quitting smoking
- Use of special devices, ordered by your doctor, may also help

So, What Can You Do to Protect Brain Health?

Actions that may help:

- Take care of your health
- [Eat healthy foods: the MIND Diet](#)
- Be active
- Learn new things
- Connect with family, friends, and communities



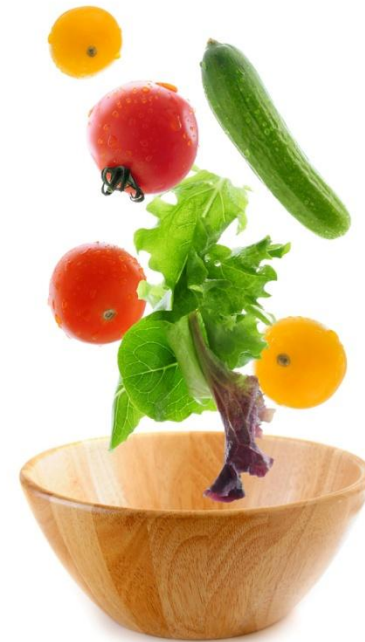
Take Care of Your Health

- Get recommended health screenings
- Manage health problems like diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol
- Consult with your health care provider to make sure your medicines are right for you
- Reduce risk for brain injuries due to falls, and other types of accidents
- Quit smoking



Eat Healthily

- Fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains
- Lean meats, fish, poultry
- Low-fat or non-fat dairy products
- Less solid fat, sugar and salt
- Proper portion sizes
- Adequate fluids



Look into healthy meal programs, like those provided by your Area Agency on Aging.

Get Moving

- Physical activity may:



- Reduce risks of diabetes, heart disease, depression, and stroke
- Improve connections among brain cells
- [The brain-changing effects of exercise](#)

- Get at least 150 minutes of exercise each week. Move about 30 minutes on most days. Walking is a good start.
- 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 a vigorous exercise program.

Take Care of your Oral Hygiene

“Studies are showing evidence for connections between poor oral health and dementia risk. For example, [in 2020](#), NIA scientists tracked long-term data from more than 6,000 older adults and found that those with signs of gum disease and mouth infections were more likely to develop Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia than those without.”

- Brush your teeth at least 2 times daily
- Floss Daily
- See your dental hygienist 2 times yearly
- Quit smoking or using tobacco products

“Taking Care of Your Teeth and Mouth.” *National Institute on Aging*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 8 August 2024, *National Institutes of Health*, <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/teeth-and-mouth/taking-care-your-teeth-and-mouth>. Accessed 13 August 2025.

Keep Your Mind Active

- Do mentally stimulating activities
- Read books and magazines
- Play games
- Learn new things
- Take or teach a class
- Be social through work or volunteering



Clinical trials have not proven that these types of activities will prevent Alzheimer's disease, but they can be fun.

Stay Connected

- People who have 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 other community organizations

Reduce Stress

How Meditation Actually Changes Your Brain

What Can You Do Today?

- Pick one thing you can do that may help your brain
- Think of small, first steps such as:
 - Taking a 10-minute walk a few times a week
 - Adding one serving of vegetables each day
 - Making an appointment for health screenings or a physical exam
- Write down what you will do and when
- Get support from family, friends, or community groups!



For More Information

- Community Programs:
 - Contact a local Area Agency on Aging (AAA)
 - Contact a local Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC)
 - 211 (Infoline)
- National Institutes of Health: <http://nih.gov>
- National Institute on Aging at NIH: <http://nia.nih.gov>
- ClinicalTrials.gov, a service of NIH: <http://clinicaltrials.gov>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/aging>
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity>

To get credit for the Be Well Program

- BRAIN