

Faith Health Initiative

Brain Power! Keeping a Sharp Mind

Have you ever run back in the house for something, only to stand in kitchen scratching your head, trying to remember what you forgot in the first place? Some memory lapses are normal but as we age, this forgetfulness could signify more serious issues like Alzheimer's disease and dementia. While these degenerative brain issues are *not* a normal part of aging, millions of Americans are affected.

- More than 5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease.
- Every 67 seconds someone in the United States develops Alzheimer's disease.
- Alzheimer's disease is the 6th leading cause of death in the United States.
- 1 in 3 seniors dies with Alzheimer's or another dementia.
- Alzheimer's disease is a form of dementia.
- Aging is the number one risk factor for dementia.

*Source National Institute on Aging

While Alzheimer's disease and dementia have some risk factors we can't control, like aging and genetics, there *are many* things we *can do* to prevent these devastating diseases.

Use these tips to improve long term brain health and reduce your risk!

Socialize. Participation in social and community activities improves mood and memory function.

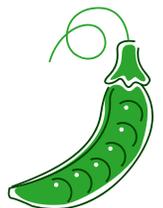


Get moving! Physical activities and exercise, such as brisk walking, help boost and maintain brain function. Research suggests that regular aerobic exercise can reduce your risk for dementia by 40 to 50 percent.

Minimize your intake saturated and trans fats. These "bad" fats tend to increase blood cholesterol levels, which encourage the production of dangerous beta-amyloid plaques in the brain—a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease. In the Chicago Health and Aging Study, people consuming the most saturated fat had triple the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

Vegetables, legumes, fruits, and whole grains should be staples in your diet.

These foods are rich in vitamins and minerals that protect the brain such as vitamin B6 and folate. The Chicago Health and Aging Study found that a high intake of fruits and vegetables was associated with a reduced risk of cognitive decline. A plant-rich diet also reduces your risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes, both of which can play a role in Alzheimer's disease.



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Avoid cooking with aluminum pots and pans. Instead, opt for stainless steel or cast iron cookware. While aluminum's role in brain functioning is still under investigation, preliminary data suggests that it may contribute to cognitive problems.

Eat some berries! Berries contain high levels of biologically active components, including a class of compounds called anthocyanosides, which fight memory impairment associated with free radicals and beta-amyloid plaques in the brain. Eat berries each day for maximum benefit.



Increase omega-3 fatty acids. In one study, individuals with the top quartile levels of docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) found in fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, and tuna, measured at baseline had lower rates of Alzheimer's over nine years of follow-up.

Go Mediterranean. Two studies that used dietary questionnaires to assess and quantify adherence to the diet in different populations found that patients who were most adherent to the Mediterranean style diet had a lower incidence of Alzheimer's, compared with those who did not follow this diet.



Control your blood pressure High blood pressure appears to be associated with an increased risk of both vascular dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

Memory Aids



- Keep "to do" lists and put them where you will see them often. Establish a routine and follow it.
- Don't rush. Give yourself time to memorize a new name or recall an old one.
- Keep everything in its place: If you always put your reading glasses in the same place, you will always know where they are.
- Use associations. For example, picture an apple on top of a gate to recall Mrs. Applegate's name.
- Keep a paper or electronic calendar of important dates. Make sure to check it a couple of times a day.

Psalm 23: 1-4 (NIV)

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

