

## UNDERSTANDING RISK FACTORS

### What is a Risk Factor?

A risk factor is anything that increases your chances of developing a disease. Many are under our control such as diet, exercise and socialization. However, some risk factors are beyond our control.

### Risk factors that cannot be changed:

**AGE:** The older you get, the more likely you are to develop dementia. However, it is NOT a normal part of aging. It is a brain disease that some people will develop. Although dementia is more common in people over 65, some forms are commonly diagnosed in those under 65.

**GENETICS:** While there are some genes associated with Alzheimer's Disease and other dementias, having those genes does not guarantee that you will develop dementia. In fact, researchers now believe that a combination of age, genetics, medical history and lifestyle factors all play a part in determining our risk of developing dementia.

## Start Practicing Good Brain Health Today!

- Choose one activity that you can do to help your brain
- Start small, don't get overwhelmed:
  1. Take a short walk a couple times a week
  2. Add one serving of vegetables each day
  3. Make an appointment with your physician for a physical or health screening
  4. Call or visit a family member
- Make it a formal goal—write it down!
- Get support by telling a family member or friend



Make Alzheimer's a Memory™

[www.alzTennessee.org](http://www.alzTennessee.org)

- Family Counseling & Care-Planning
- Education & Resource Referrals
- Caregiver Training
- First Responder Education
- FREE Helpline
- Support Groups
- Advocacy
- Research



Help is **NOW** a  
Finger Tip Away!

[www.alzTennessee.org/academy](http://www.alzTennessee.org/academy)

Alzheimer's Tennessee offers free video, online and print resources presented by physicians, lawyers and dementia care experts to educate and inspire caregivers.

Janice Wade-Whitehead, President & CEO

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## REDUCING YOUR RISK OF DEMENTIA



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## Practicing Good Brain Health



With the rise of Alzheimer's and other dementias, many people wonder if there is anything they can do to reduce their risk of developing dementia. Current research suggests that the... **ANSWER is YES!**

Ongoing research is helping us learn more about ways to maintain a healthy brain. While age and family history may increase risk, other factors such as environment, diet, exercise and lifestyle are believed to have an influence as well.



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# Practicing Good Brain Health: Managing Risks

Managing your health and keeping your body healthy—especially your heart—can help keep your brain healthy. Things you can do to effectively manage your health:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Manage your blood pressure and cholesterol
- Control type 2 diabetes
- Quit smoking
- Get treatment for depression and any sleep problems
- Have a physician or pharmacist review all medications on a regular basis

## GET REGULAR EXERCISE

Staying physically active is healthy for your heart. Since the brain needs oxygen and a healthy blood supply to work its best, what's good for the heart is good for the brain.

Be active at least 30 minutes a day, 5 times a week. Walking is a good start. The exercise does not need to be strenuous. Find something you enjoy and fit it into your lifestyle. Here are some ideas:

- Walk or bike instead of driving
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Exercise with friends—walk and chat
- Play tennis or participate in a team sport
- Dancing can be fun and healthy
- Swimming is a great low-impact exercise
- Tai Chi or yoga can help improve balance and flexibility
- Take a class at your local senior center, church, or fitness center.

## EAT A HEALTHY DIET

What we eat may influence our risk for developing many health conditions. A healthy diet is beneficial at any age.

- Eat a balanced diet with lots of colorful fruits and vegetables high in antioxidants.
- Foods that may be especially good for your brain include: green leafy vegetables, berries, broccoli and legumes.
- Eat healthy fats found in nuts and certain fish, such as salmon or tuna. Fish high in omega-3 fatty acids may also be especially beneficial.
- Limit the amount of high fat, fried, sugary or salty food that you eat.
- Drink in moderation. Some research suggests that moderate amounts of red wine may contain healthy antioxidants.

The MIND Diet is Brain and Heart healthy and may help prevent Alzheimer's Disease.

## MIND Diet Guidelines

### Increase

<b>Whole grains:</b>	<b>3x per day</b>
<b>Green leafy vegetables:</b>	<b>at least 1x per day</b>
<b>Nonstarchy vegetables:</b>	<b>at least 1x per day</b>
<b>Berries:</b>	<b>at least 2x per week</b>
<b>Poultry:</b>	<b>at least 2x per week</b>
<b>Fish:</b>	<b>at least 1x per week</b>
<b>Nuts/seeds:</b>	<b>at least 1x per day</b>
<b>Legumes:</b>	<b>at least 3-4 x per week</b>

### Decrease

<b>Red meat:</b>	<b>no more than 4x per week</b>
<b>Cheese:</b>	<b>no more than 1x per week</b>
<b>Solid saturated fats:</b>	<b>no more than 1 Tbs per day</b>
<b>Sweets and desserts:</b>	<b>no more than 1x per week</b>
<b>Fried foods:</b>	<b>no more than 1x per week</b>



## ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

Exercising and challenging your brain is a great way to stay sharp. Find activities that interest you and are fun. Here are some suggestions:

- Do puzzles such as word searches or number games
- Read books, magazines, newspapers
- Learn something new like a different language or a new skill such as cooking, knitting or playing an instrument
- Try doing something in a different way such as driving a new route to work or try writing with your non-dominant hand
- Do an online search for "brain games" some websites offer them for free

## STAY SOCIALLY CONNECTED

People who regularly engage in social activities may be less vulnerable to depression, and some research has shown that social interaction may also help keep the brain vital and healthy. Find ways to maintain friendships and stay connected with others.

- Stay active in your faith community
- Volunteer for a local charity, school or other cause
- Join a social club or travel group
- Maintain healthy relationships with friends, family and communities