Dementia

How to reduce your risk

NeuRA
Discover — Conquer — Cure

Dementia is an umbrella term for several diseases that affect memory, thinking and ability to undertake daily tasks. The good news is that while cases are on the rise, developing dementia is **not inevitable** for most people. Researchers have found that **up to 45% of dementia cases** could be prevented or delayed if we address 14 lifestyle factors.

Having one or more of these risk factors doesn't mean you will develop dementia, but it does increase the likelihood of dementia developing.

What are those 14 factors you can change?



High cholesterol

To manage LDL or "bad" cholesterol, eat a balanced, heart-healthy diet, enjoy regular exercise and adhere to any medication prescribed by your doctor.



Hypertension (high blood pressure)

Keep blood pressure at a healthy range to aid steady brain blood flow through a healthy diet, regular exercise and adherance to any medication prescribed by your doctor.



Head injury

Simple steps to protect your brain from traumatic injury include wearing a helmet during contact sports or cycling.



Excessive alcohol consumption

Drink alcohol mindfully: limit your alcohol intake to national guidelines to shield your brain cells from toxin damage.



Untreated hearing loss

If you have concerns, talk to your doctor and have your hearing tested.



Untreated vision loss

As with your ears, look after your eyes – have them tested regularly.



Physical inactivity

National guidelines suggest we aim for 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise each week, plus a couple of sessions of weight training if possible.



Diabetes

Eat a whole-food diet, enjoy regular exercise and adhere to any medication prescribed by your doctor to manage glucose levels and prevent type 2 diabetes.



Education

Learning in early life is the best possible start to long-term dementia prevention, while challenging your brain as you age adds protection.



Social isolation

Seeing friends and family regularly and taking part in social activities has been shown to reduce dementia risk.



Air pollution

Spend time in green spaces, choose active transport and reduce your exposure to outdoor and indoor air pollution.



Obesity

Excess body weight can accelerate brain ageing, so a healthy diet and exercise are key.



Smoking

Protect your blood vessels and improve your breathing by choosing to quit or avoid smoking.



Depression

Nurture your mental well-being: Seek professional care and build stress-management routines to treat depression early and effectively.

We need to work to protect our brain health throughout our lives.

Lower levels of education **in our early lives** limits our cognitive reserve.

In midlife, between the ages of around 45 to 65 years, we need to address various health factors. Getting our hearing and sight tested and using hearing aids and glasses where necessary can reduce our risk. Likewise having our cholesterol and blood pressure checked and, if necessary, treated. We also need to maintain a healthy weight, as being overweight or obese adds stress to our body. If you think this all sounds like advice for a healthy body, it's true! What's good for the heart is generally good for the brain.

In later life, when we're 65 years old or older, we need continue good habits. We need to stay active and social. We also need to speak with our doctor about managing our blood sugar or diabetes, treating any depression and continuing our sight and hearing checks. Where possible, we should also limit our exposure to air pollution.

What can we do?

- Exercise regularly
- Socialise regularly
- Avoid excessive alcohol consumption and quit smoking
- Get our hearing checked and use aids, if required
- Ask your doctor to check your cholesterol, diabetes, blood pressure and weight and treat as recommended
- Seek treatment for any depressive symptoms

Brain food

A study led by NeuRA researchers showed older adults who followed a diet designed for brain health had a reduced risk of developing cognitive impairment. The MIND diet is based partially on the Mediterranean diet but incorporates foods specifically relevant to brain health with a focus on green leafy vegetables, whole grains, olive oil and small amounts of red meat.

Check your numbers!

See your doctor to monitor your:


Blood pressure


Diabetes risk


Weight

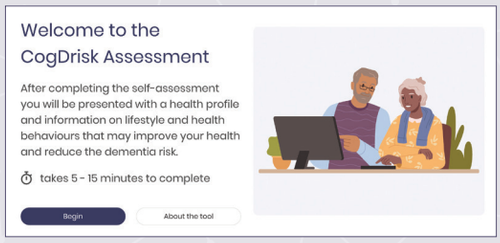

Cholesterol

Understand your dementia risk

Researchers from NeuRA and the University of NSW (UNSW) have developed CogDrisk, a tool to help you understand your dementia risk.

The assessment is available at **https://cogdrisk.neura.edu.au/**. It takes 20 minutes to complete and gives you a personalised report you can discuss with your doctor.

Scan the QR code to take the assessment



Neuroscience Research Australia is an independent, not-for-profit, medical research institute tackling the brain health challenges that shape our lives. Our aim is to protect and support brain health at every stage of life and prevent loss of function wherever possible, prioritising early intervention, personalised care and improved quality of life.

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References:
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