

## Alzheimer's Association Maintain Your Brain®

Alzheimer's Association Maintain Your Brain® is a public health and education campaign designed to help all Americans understand steps they can take now to make brain health part of their overall goals for healthy aging; to promote awareness of recent progress in Alzheimer science; and to make brain health and Alzheimer's disease national research priorities.

### Thinking ahead

When people think about staying fit, they generally think from the neck down. But the health of your brain plays a critical role in almost everything you do: thinking, feeling, remembering, working, and playing – even sleeping.

The good news is we now know there's a lot you can do to help keep your brain healthier as you age. These steps might also reduce your risk of Alzheimer's disease or other dementias.

Simple brain-healthy lifestyle modifications also could have an enormous impact on our nation's public health and the cost of healthcare. If you make brain-healthy choices and take action by getting involved with the Alzheimer's Association, your efforts could help realize a future without Alzheimer's disease.

### Make brain-healthy life choices

Maintain Your Brain® offers the best and most up-to-date information available so that you can make your own decisions about your health.

### Stay physically active

Physical exercise is essential for maintaining good blood flow to the brain and encouraging growth of new brain cells. It also can significantly reduce the risk of heart attack, stroke and diabetes, and thereby protect against those risk factors for Alzheimer's and other dementias.

### Keep mentally active

Mentally stimulating activities strengthen brain cells and the connections between them, and may even trigger growth of new nerve cells.

### Remain socially involved

Social activity not only makes physical and mental activity more enjoyable, it can reduce stress levels, which helps maintain healthy connections among brain cells.

### Adopt a brain-healthy diet

Research suggests that high cholesterol may contribute to stroke and brain cell damage. A low fat, low cholesterol diet is advisable. And there is growing evidence that a diet rich in dark vegetables and fruits, which contain antioxidants, may help protect brain cells.

### Be heart smart

Because your brain is nourished by a rich network of blood vessels, its health is closely tied to the overall health of your heart and circulatory system. Do everything you can to keep your body weight, blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar within recommended ranges to reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

### Disease and risk factors you can't control

Alzheimer's disease is one of the most serious threats to brain health. It is the most common form of dementia, a group of brain disorders that affect your memory and other thinking skills and decrease your ability to function in daily life. Well-established risk factors for Alzheimer's disease include family history (having parents or siblings with the disease) and aging (10 percent of those over age 65 and 50 percent of those over 85 have Alzheimer's).

Unfortunately, aging and family history are two risk factors you can't control. These risk factors that you cannot change will set a starting point for you, but there is hope that adopting the Maintain Your Brain® life habits might delay or prevent the appearance of Alzheimer's disease.

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## **10 ways to Maintain Your Brain®**

### **1. Head first**

Good health starts with your brain. It's one of the most vital body organs, and it needs care and maintenance.

### **2. Take brain health to heart**

What's good for the heart is good for the brain. Do something every day to prevent heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and stroke – all of which can increase your risk of Alzheimer's.

### **3. Your numbers count**

Keep your body weight, blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels within recommended ranges.

### **4. Feed your brain**

Eat less fat and more antioxidant-rich foods.

### **5. Work your body**

Physical exercise keeps the blood flowing and may encourage new brain cells. Do what you can – like walking 30 minutes a day – to keep both body and mind active.

### **6. Jog your mind**

Keeping your brain active and engaged increases its vitality and builds reserves of brain cells and connections. Read, write, play games, learn new things, do crossword puzzles.

### **7. Connect with others**

Leisure activities that combine physical, mental and social elements may be most likely to prevent dementia. Be social, converse, volunteer, join a club, or take a class.

### **8. Heads up! Protect your brain**

Take precautions against head injuries. Use your car seat belts; unclutter your house to avoid falls; and wear a helmet when cycling.

### **9. Use your head**

Avoid unhealthy habits. Don't smoke, drink excessive alcohol or use street drugs.

### **10. Think ahead – start today!**

You can do something today to protect your tomorrow.

## **The science behind these recommendations**

The Alzheimer's Association Maintain Your Brain® public education campaign is based on the best available science about brain health. An annotated reference list of important studies in key areas is available on our Web site at [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org). While there is strong evidence pointing to ways to support brain health and possibly reduce risk of dementia, it's important to understand that there is no way to predict what will happen to any particular person. Maintain Your Brain® does not guarantee individual health outcomes.

## **Join our campaign**

### **Learn**

Keep informed about Alzheimer's disease.

### **Advocate**

Join our efforts to increase research funding.

### **Donate**

Support the Alzheimer's Association – we're leading a new era of hope.

### **Hope**

Learn about our progress in science.

To learn more about Maintain Your Brain®, visit [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)

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