

Experts Say These Are 7 Easy Ways To Decrease Your Risk Of Dementia

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Dementia is a term for the loss of cognitive functioning, often impacting people's memory and language skills. Many people wonder if there are [ways to prevent dementia](#) because it is so prevalent – the most common cause of dementia is Alzheimer's, which, according to [the Alzheimer's Association](#), affects about 5.8 million Americans. Since dementia has no known cure, many people are understandably worried about getting dementia later in life. The good news is that there are measures that you can take to decrease your chances of getting dementia in the long-term.

According to [Dr. Lon Schneider](#), director of Alzheimer's Research and Clinical Center of California at the University of Southern California, the average age of [onset for dementia](#) is around 80. Although [once dementia has begun](#), there are limited courses of action, Dr. Schneider stresses that people often overestimate the role of genetics, and underestimate environmental factors.

“There are some genetic risk factors,” Dr. Schneider says. “But, in late onset dementia, those genetic risk factors are not that prevalent [...] Determinants are largely environmental.”

This means that certain lifestyle changes can genuinely decrease your risk for dementia. Dr. Schneider warns that any preventative measure is not a "quick fix;" in order to substantially decrease your risk, any changes have to be long-term.

Additionally, he says many lifestyle changes are more effective when implemented later in life, closer to the average onset age. However, forming these habits at a younger age and making lifestyle changes sooner can only help.

These are the most effective steps to decrease your risk of dementia, according to experts.

1. Being Aware Of Your Blood Pressure

According to the [National Institutes of Health](#), an increasing number studies have linked high blood pressure to dementia. Although studies have yet to prove that lowering your blood pressure reduces your risk for dementia, there is substantial evidence that it prevents [mild cognitive impairment](#), which is a precursor for dementia.

Dr. Schneider says the by addressing blood pressure issues earlier in life, there's a good chance you'll decrease your chances for dementia later.

2. Smoking Less

It's well known that smoking causes plenty of negative health ramifications, and it's impact on cognitive health is no different.

"Of the total risks for developing dementia, up 5% [is attributable to smoking](#)," Dr. Schneider says.

By cutting down on smoking, you could be doing your a huge favor for your cognitive health down the road.

3. Taking Walks

According to the [Alzheimer's Association](#), there is strong evidence that regular activity can decrease someone's risk for Alzheimer's disease; they say that exercise may "directly benefit brain cells by increasing blood and oxygen flow in the brain," which can help cognitive function.

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Dr. Schneider says that regular activity doesn't necessarily mean you have to start hitting the gym every day. He said you should aim for a least a few walks a week, and try to keep up an active lifestyle in general.

4. Keeping Up Your Social Life

Heading into old age, many older people tend to isolate themselves. This can actually have negative consequences for their cognitive function.

"It appears that a lack of interaction increases the likelihood of significant cognitive impairment," Dr. Schneider says.

A recent study from scientists at Florida State University showed that loneliness was associated with a substantial increased risk for dementia. Experts are not exactly sure why there's a correlation, but, by keeping up a social life as you age, you can prevent the isolation that impacts cognitive function.

5. Managing Hearing Loss

Hearing loss is way more common than you think, impacting about 48 million Americans, according to the Hearing Loss Association of America. Dr. Schneider

says scientists currently aren't sure why there's a correlation, but unmanaged hearing loss at an old age can [significantly increase your risk for dementia](#).

Dr. Schneider says that people tend to ignore symptoms of hearing loss, even though hearing loss can be easily managed with a doctor's help. If you want to significantly decrease your risk for dementia, it's a good idea to be cognizant of your hearing health.

6. Take Care Of Your Heart

Dr. Schneider says that "what's good for your heart is good for your brain." He says that studies have shown that by [minimizing cardiovascular risk factors](#), you decrease your risk for dementia.

According to the [US Department of Health and Human Services](#), some simple ways to keep your heart healthy include managing stress and monitoring your cholesterol.

7. Eat Healthy

Dr. Schneider says that some studies [recommend the Mediterranean diet](#) – which emphasizes plant-based foods – to prevent dementia. However, while the evidence for the Mediterranean diet is promising, Dr. Schneider says that a more general healthy, eating balanced foods is shown to help with cognitive function and decrease your risk for dementia.

Dementia is a scary thought for anyone, but the good news is that you can limit your personal risk factors. By making certain lifestyle adjustments, you can successfully decrease your chance for dementia.