



Keys to Living & Aging Well: Brain Health & Reducing Dementia Risk Factors

9/28/22 Webinar

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Brain Health



Brain Health panel

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Time to rethink aging & brain health

Cognitive decline is NOT inevitable!

According to an AARP survey of Americans aged 34 to 75, nearly 93% understand the vital importance of brain health, but have no idea how to make their brains healthier or that such a goal is possible

Source: *Keep Sharp: Build A Better Brain at Any Age*, Sanjay Gupta, MD, 2021.

Normal changes or dementia?

Normal age-related cognitive changes (changes in memory, language and thinking) and the cognitive changes of Alzheimer's disease can be subtle

People experiencing cognitive changes should seek medical help to determine if the changes are normal for one's age, are reversible (for example, caused by a new medication or vitamin deficiency), **or may be a symptom of Alzheimer's or another dementia.**

Causes of dementia-like symptoms include depression, untreated sleep apnea, delirium, side effects of medications, Lyme disease, thyroid problems, certain vitamin deficiencies and excessive alcohol consumption.

Source: 2022 Alzheimer's Disease Facts & Figures, Alzheimer's Association

<https://www.alz.org/media/documents/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf>

Dementia Prevalence & Risk Factors

Based on estimates from Aging, Demographics, and Memory Study (ADAMS), a nationally representative sample of older adults, **11% of people age 65 and older in the United States have dementia**

An estimated 6.5 million Americans age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's dementia in 2022. 73% are age 75 or older. Almost two-thirds of Americans with Alzheimer's are women.

Older non-Hispanic Blacks and Hispanic Americans are disproportionately more likely than older Whites to have Alzheimer's or other dementias.

Modifiable Risk Factors & why they matter

Although age, genetics and family history cannot be changed, **other risk factors can be changed or modified to reduce the risk of cognitive decline and dementia.**

Examples of **modifiable risk factors** are **physical activity, smoking, education, staying socially and mentally active, blood pressure and diet.**

The 2020 recommendations of The Lancet Commission on dementia prevention, intervention and care suggest that **addressing modifiable risk factors might prevent or delay up to 40% of dementia cases.**

Challenges in TN

Tennessee's Big 4

- Obesity
 - Tobacco
 - Physical inactivity
 - Substance abuse
-
- All of these affect brain health & increase risk for Alzheimer's and related dementias in addition to other health conditions

You CAN
modify
your
future

Lifestyle and Risk factors determine more of longevity than genes or parental age

Strength, flexibility and stamina drop after 55

62% of women 75-85 had trouble kneeling or stooping (Framingham study)

66% could not lift 10 lbs

42% could not stand for 15 minutes

MacArthur Study of Aging found 70-85 could make major gains in fitness

Fitness predicts longevity more than age

Healthy Behaviors matter most

- **Successful aging is significantly influenced by the individual**
- Life expectancy is influenced by **behavioral patterns (40%), genetics (30%), social circumstances (15%)**.
Lifestyle factors account for approximately 10 years difference in life expectancy
- **Healthy behaviors reduce risk and severity of chronic disease, help preserve physical and cognitive function, reduce and delay disability and promote healthy aging**
- **Socialization is vital to prevent cognitive decline and provide a sense of meaning and connectedness**

Do these things

- Never Smoke
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Do 30 minutes/day vigorous physical activity
- Keep alcohol intake moderate
- Eat a healthy diet

Things you may not know

- TV can kill you
- Beware of more than 14 drinks a week
- Drink more coffee
- Marriage improves survival for men>women
- Loneliness is dangerous
- If you aren't happy, fake it
- Have a dog if you live alone

Keys to Brain Health

- Fitness
- Cognitive Challenge
- Social Engagement
- Healthy Diet
- Sleep
- Manage adversity/ stress/ chronic illness
- Purpose & meaning

Fitness helps brain function

- Nerve Growth Factor/Neurogenesis
- Osteocalcin
- Blood flow to the brain
- Reduce incidence of forgetfulness
- Delays onset of dementia
- Improves depression
- Improves brain connections(white matter)

Walk a mile everyday

- Walking speed predicts life expectancy
- Strong quadriceps associated with cognition
- Walk with others
- Walk outside
- Reduce contagious illnesses
- Improve pulmonary function
- Reduce arthritic pain and limitation

Cognitive Challenge

- Brains love colleges
- Extend your comfort range
- Take courses (Road Scholars; Osher Life Long Learning)
- Be Creative (you have time)
- Limit TV (even the History Channel)
- Take music lessons
- Improve computer skills
- Read poetry
- Don't use GPS

Social Engagement

- Replace friends lost from retirement, death
- Talk but mostly LISTEN
- Social sports (tennis, Tai Chi, Yoga)
- Make friends with people not like you
- Read to children
- Walk together
- Sing, dance
- Volunteer

MIND diet & foods to avoid

MIND: Mediterranean & DASH diets

Reduces/delays Alzheimer's Disease

Improves cognitive function

Improves vascular health



Avoid these foods:

- Red meat
- Concentrated sweets
- High fat dairy
- Refined carbohydrates
- Fried food



Social connection

Contribute much to Lifespan, Health Outcomes ,
Happiness

Marital dissatisfaction associated with sudden cardiac
death

You know less than you think about intimates - LEARN!

Telling your partner about your organs or bowels is NOT
intimacy!

Purpose & Meaning

What have you learned ?

How did you learn it ?

Who can you help ?

What will live on from your life ?

Keep a journal

Write letters to your grandchildren – they've never seen one!

Keys to Brain Health: What you MUST do

- Stay physically active
- Eat well – MIND diet & drink lots of water
- Sleep 7-8 hours a night
- Be a life-long learner
- Avoid hospitals
- Actively nurture relationships
- Humor, generosity
- Adapt to illness, adversity
- Find purpose & meaning

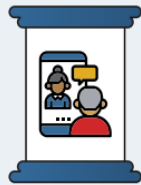
Global Council on Brain Health



CHOOSE Brain-Healthy Habits

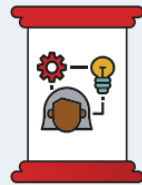
Simple choices can benefit your brain

Six Pillars of Brain Health



Be Social

Keep in touch with friends & family, don't let yourself get isolated.



Engage Your Brain

Find ways to stimulate your thinking, explore new interests and hobbies.



Manage Stress

Practice relaxation, adopt a stable daily schedule.



Ongoing Exercise

Move throughout the day, target 2½ hours a week of moderate physical activity.



Restorative Sleep

Get 7–8 hours of restful sleep every day.



Eat Right

Choose a nutritious, heart-healthy diet of fish, veggies, and fruits.

Tips to adopt the Six Pillars:

- ✓ Set a goal, identify a specific action you want to take.
- ✓ Be realistic about the goals you choose.
- ✓ Take a step-by-step, gradual approach.
- ✓ Find something fun; choose what you enjoy.
- ✓ Re-purpose some of your free time.
- ✓ Rethink your environment to reduce temptations.
- ✓ Celebrate the wins.
- ✓ Learn from the setbacks.
- ✓ Involve friends or family with common goals.
- ✓ Pick a good time to start.

Learn more about the Six Pillars: [GlobalCouncilonBrainHealth.org](https://www.globalcouncilonbrainhealth.org)

How to Sustain Brain Healthy Behaviors: Applying Lessons of Public Health and Science to Drive Change

Contact: GCBH@aarp.org | For more brain health tips see [StayingSharp.org](https://www.stayingsharp.org) | DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26419/pia.00106.002>



Global Council on
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Resource: Global Council on Brain Health

<https://www.aarp.org/health/brain-health/global-council-on-brain-health//six-pillars-interviews/>

Brain Health



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Cultural Aspects of Care

- Race, culture, and spiritual beliefs impact worldview, experience of health and illness, and health related behaviors
- Must consider negative impacts of health & socioeconomic disparities → higher prevalence of Alzheimer's or a related dementia for Black and Hispanic elders
- Major concerns
 - Latinx – diabetes
 - AA – hypertension, stroke
 - Caucasian (Scotch, Irish, Eastern European) heart disease

Prevalence of ADRD

- Growing diversity of older Americans
- Older non-Hispanic Black & Hispanic Americans are disproportionately more likely than Whites to have Alzheimer's or a related dementia (ADRD)
 - **older Blacks = 2x as likely to have ADRD as older Whites**
 - **older Hispanic adults = 1.5x as likely to have ADRD**
 - Prevalence may differ from one specific Hispanic ethnic group to another (e.g., Mexican vs. Caribbean Americans)

Source: 2022 Alzheimer's Facts & Figures report; Alzheimer's Association

<https://www.alz.org/media/documents/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf>

Higher Risk & Health Disparities

- Higher prevalence of ADRD in Black & Hispanic populations appears to be due to a **higher risk of developing dementia**
- Difference in risk is explained by historic disparities: socio-economic, health, life experiences
- **Different social & physical environments by race/ethnicity across the life course increase risk for chronic conditions associated with higher dementia risk (e.g., cardiovascular disease, diabetes)**
- Missed or delayed diagnoses of ADRD are more common among Black and Hispanic older adults

Health Screening Resulting in Early Detection

Importance of routine health screenings &
prevention/early detection

Prevention: You Can Make A Difference in Your Destiny

Aging Changes

- Higher blood pressure (systolic)
- Lower bone mass
- Lower weight, especially after 74 years of age
- Lower kidney function

Prevention: You Can Make A Difference in Your Destiny

Importance of Sleep & Physical Activity/Exercise for Cardiac and Brain Health

What you can do:

- Keep a healthy Social Circle; Social Engagement
- Be mindful; faith; positive age beliefs
- Eat Well: Whole Grains, Nuts, Plant-Based Diet
- If Blood Pressure is elevated, avoid high salt intake
- If Blood Sugar is high or unstable, balance out carbohydrate intake
- No Alcohol Consumption that impairs
- No smoking

Go Do What You Need To Do: Make A Difference in Your Destiny

- Weight assessment
- Diabetes Screening
- BP & Cholesterol management
- High Risk Medications
- Flu Shot, Pneumonia Shot, & COVID Shot

Cultural Aspects of Care

- Life expectancy is influenced by behavioral patterns (40%), genetics (30%), social circumstances (15%).
- African American culture
- Common to avoid or limit exercise to try to protect or save hairstyle (28-45% felt that hair impeded maintaining healthy body weight)
- My family...

My Family



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- My family destiny: obesity → diabetes + high blood pressure → major stroke → deceased

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- My family destiny: obesity → diabetes + high blood pressure → major stroke → deceased
- Healthy Aging vs. Hair looking good in the casket

Tips and Pearls

- Tips for making exercise part of routine – gamify...smart watches
- Everyone is different; learn what your hair likes, dislikes and how to make it flourish– No right or wrong way to explore your hair
 - Moisturize- no mineral oil or formulations with alcohol
 - Use water in moderation to simply hydrate the ends
 - Keep hair off neck: Do specific updo to keep curls intact or Afro puff
 - Brush hair and then put in ponytails, cornrows, twists, locks, plait wrap bun on top of your head
 - Embrace accessories: headbands– but don't cover entire head (creates heat)

Summary

- **Maintain a healthy social network**
- **Stimulate your brain**
- **Physical activity**
- **You are what you eat**
- **Share with your health care provider regarding your goals and wishes**
- **Squelch your stress: pray→be mindful→meditate**

Janet Jernigan, MA, MBA

Community Volunteer
& former Executive Director, FiftyForward



Questions for the Panel

Q&A



Upcoming Webinar Segments

Keys to Living & Aging Well

- Mental Health
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