

# Brain health: what's **heart** got to do with it?

**What's good for the heart is also good for the brain**



A growing body of research shows a strong association between cardiovascular risk factors (such as smoking, high blood pressure and high cholesterol) and dementia.

It makes sense – the brain needs a healthy heart to provide a healthy blood supply to keep brain cells functioning well.

**What can I do to reduce my risks of dementia and cardiovascular disease?**

There are some risk factors that we have no control over, such as age and genetics. But the good news is there are some risk factors we can control to help reduce the risk of both dementia and cardiovascular disease.



# Take the following steps to look after your brain and heart health

**Maintain blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and body weight at healthy levels** To do this, enjoy healthy eating, be physically active, live smoke-free and limit your alcohol intake. Have regular check-ups with your GP and follow their advice. Some people will need medication and it should be taken strictly as directed.

**Eat healthily** Healthy eating is important in looking after your brain and your heart. Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes, fruits and cereals (preferably wholegrain), choose lean cuts of meat and limit saturated and trans fats in your diet.

**Be physically active** Try activities such as walking, cycling, swimming and dancing. The *National Physical Activity Guidelines for Australian Adults* recommend doing at least 30 minutes of activity, such as brisk walking, on most, preferably all, days.

**Participate in social activities** Catch up regularly with family and friends, join a club or group, or volunteer.

**Don't smoke** Smoking is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease and dementia, as well as a range of cancers and other diseases. If you do smoke, seek advice from Quitline on 131 848 or visit [quitnow.info.au](http://quitnow.info.au).

**Drink alcohol in moderation** Excessive alcohol consumption may increase the risk of developing cardiovascular disease and dementia. If you drink alcohol, follow the national alcohol guidelines and limit your intake to no more than two standard drinks in any one day.

## What else can you do?

Visit [mindyourmind.org.au](http://mindyourmind.org.au) to find out how you can reduce your risk of dementia by following the seven Mind your Mind signposts.

To find out more about reducing your risk of cardiovascular disease visit [heartfoundation.org.au](http://heartfoundation.org.au).



Alzheimer's  
Australia  
Living with dementia



National Dementia Helpline  
**1800 100 500**  
[alzheimers.org.au](http://alzheimers.org.au)



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