



Dementia risk reduction

Dementia is a term used to describe a number of diseases that affect the brain, including Alzheimer's disease. What causes dementia is mostly unknown, but scientists believe that it is likely that a combination of factors are involved.

There are several factors that, while not directly causing dementia, are associated with an increased risk of developing dementia. Some of these factors we can change, and some we can't.

The risk factors for dementia that we can't change are:

- ◆ Getting older

The risk of developing dementia increases with age and most cases occur in older people. From the age of 65, the risk of having dementia doubles every 5 years.

- ◆ Having a family history of dementia

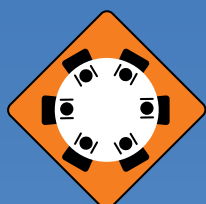
Having a family history of dementia is associated with a slightly increased risk of developing dementia. It is important to know that this doesn't mean you will develop dementia.

The risk factors for dementia that we may be able to change are:

- ◆ Lack of mental stimulation
- ◆ High saturated fat diet
- ◆ Physical inactivity
- ◆ High blood pressure
- ◆ High cholesterol
- ◆ Type 2 diabetes
- ◆ Obesity
- ◆ Smoking
- ◆ Excessive alcohol intake
- ◆ Social isolation
- ◆ Head injury

How can I reduce my risk?

Research has shown that a range of lifestyle and health factors may reduce the risk or delay the onset of dementia. While these are not a guarantee against dementia, they will provide many other health and wellbeing benefits.





To help look after your brain health and reduce your risk of dementia:

Keep your brain active

Challenge the brain with a variety of mentally stimulating activities that you enjoy. For example, read a book, do crossword, sudoku and jigsaw puzzles, play cards, enrol in a course, or do knitting, weaving or woodwork.

Eat healthily

Avoid a high intake of foods that are high in saturated fats such as butter, deep fried food, processed deli meats, pastries, cakes and biscuits. Choose a variety of foods that include plenty of vegetables, fruit and wholegrains and reduced fat dairy products. If you eat meat, choose lean cuts and cook with monounsaturated or polyunsaturated oils such as canola, olive, sunflower, and soybean.

Be physically active

The benefit of physical activity is that it helps with blood flow and oxygen supply to the brain. It also promotes brain cell growth and survival. Follow the *National Physical Activity Guidelines* and participate in at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day. Choose activities that you enjoy such as walking, swimming, dancing, tai chi or join an exercise group.

Manage your blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and body weight

Research shows that people who have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes or are obese, particularly around middle age, have a greater risk of developing dementia in later life. Visit your doctor to have regular check-ups and follow their advice.

Participate in social activities

Participating in social activities is great for overall health. Catch up with friends and family, and get involved in activities you enjoy. Try joining a social group, or going to concerts or the theatre.

Don't smoke

A number of studies have shown that people who smoke have a greater chance of developing dementia than people who do not. If you do smoke, seek advice from Quitline on 131 848 or visit www.quitnow.info.au

If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation

Drinking large quantities of alcohol increases the risk of developing dementia, including alcohol-related dementia. Interestingly, drinking small to moderate amounts of alcohol may reduce dementia risk – however, if you currently don't drink alcohol, there is no evidence to suggest you should start. The national alcohol guidelines recommend no more than two standard drinks per day.

Protect your head from injury

People who have experienced a severe head injury, particularly with a loss of consciousness for an extended period, are at greater risk of developing dementia. So protect your head by wearing a helmet when riding a motorbike or bicycle, wear a seatbelt when traveling in a vehicle, and take care as a pedestrian. Be mindful of the risks of falling at home from loose objects, rugs, tools and cords.

For more information about dementia and dementia risk reduction, visit Alzheimer's Australia's Mind your Mind website mindyourmind.org.au. Alternatively, please call the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500** (English only). For assistance in Assyrian, please phone the Telephone Interpreter Service on **131 450** to connect you to the National Dementia Helpline.

