



# What You Can Do To Prevent Alzheimer's Disease

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

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## Risk Factors for Alzheimer's Disease

There is no known cure for Alzheimer's disease. It is a complex, degenerative disorder. Medications and treatments can help manage some people's symptoms. But there are certain risk factors for the disease. Some of these risk factors are lifestyle related and therefore considered modifiable. Let's take a look at Alzheimer's prevention.

### Risk Factors

The risk factors you can't change include your age, family history or genetics and gender.

#### Age

The older you are the higher your risk of late-onset or sporadic Alzheimer's disease. Late-onset Alzheimer's affects one in 20 Canadians over the age of 65. For Canadians 85 years old and older that risk jumps to one in four.

#### Family History or Genetics

If you have a direct relative, a parent or a sibling, with Alzheimer's your chance of developing Alzheimer's is three times that of someone without any family history of the disease. Should both your parents have Alzheimer's your risk is greater still. However, this does not mean that you will get Alzheimer's disease only that your risk is higher.

One form of early-onset Alzheimer's, called Familial Alzheimer's disease is the result of an inherited genetic mutation on one of three genes. This form of Alzheimer's is extremely rare. It affects families across generations and starts when people are in their 30s and 40s. If a parent has one of these gene mutations, you have a 50% chance of developing this form of Alzheimer's disease.

#### Gender

Gender is also a risk factor for Alzheimer's. Women are twice as likely as men to get Alzheimer's. Even when statistics are adjusted to account for the fact that women live longer than men. Scientists believe that menopause and the decline in estrogen play a role in Alzheimer's development in women.

#### Modifiable Risk Factors

Risk factors you can change are lifestyle related. They include diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, smoking, depression, cognitive inactivity and physical inactivity.

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## **Cardiovascular Disease**

Cardiovascular disease is linked with developing Alzheimer's disease in later life. A history of strokes doubles the risk of dementia as you age. Reducing your bad cholesterol along with lowering your blood pressure will protect your heart health and lower your risk for Alzheimer's.

## **Diabetes**

Type 2 diabetes has also been linked with Alzheimer's disease. The glucose in the brains of Alzheimer's patients is as impaired as it is in people with Type 2 diabetes.

## **Smoking and Alcohol**

It is well known that smoking is bad for you. Smoking damages your heart, lungs and vascular system, all of which affect blood flow to the brain. So it follows that smoking will also increase your risk for Alzheimer's disease. Studies have also linked excessive alcohol consumption to Alzheimer's disease.

## **Depression**

A history of clinical depression has also been linked to Alzheimer's in later life.

## **Diet and Exercise**

Eating a healthy, balanced diet, full of dark-skinned fruits, green vegetables, fish and nuts will lower your risk for Alzheimer's disease. Anti-oxidant-rich vegetables like kale and broccoli as well as omega-3-rich halibut and mackerel are thought to protect brain cells. Although more research is needed to discover what quantities of these foods you would need to consume to best benefit your brain. Maintaining a healthy body weight and exercising regularly, at least five times a week for at least 30 minutes, will also reduce your risk.

## **Exercises for Your Brain**

Keeping your grey cells busy through life-long learning will also lower your risk for Alzheimer's disease. So read your way through the classics. Sign up for a night class. Work on a daily crossword or Sudoku puzzle.