

Health and Wellness
Ways to Avoid Dementia
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Introduction

Although they're no magic formula to avoid dementia (particularly due to environmental and genetic factors), here's information about a fighting chance for avoidance as well as tips for dementia patients. This topic was intentionally chosen because one in eight Americans will develop dementia/Alzheimer's and early choices can potentially make a huge difference. Even for teenagers, it's not too early to start boosting brain reserves and take steps for brain health. Keep an open mind, learn more and make the most informed decisions.

Overview:

“‘Dementia’ is an umbrella term describing a variety of diseases and conditions that develop when nerve cells in the brain die or no longer function normally. The death or malfunction of these nerve cells, called neurons, causes changes in one’s memory, behavior and ability to think clearly. In Alzheimer’s disease, these brain changes eventually impair an individual’s ability to carry out such basic bodily functions as walking and swallowing. Alzheimer’s disease is the most common type of dementia.”^(A) Even though Alzheimer’s disease can affect people in different ways, the most common pattern of symptoms begins with a gradual inability to remember new information. It is agreed that multiple factors cause dementia. While most people are diagnosed at age 65 or older, cause for concern exists for everyone because the disease develops for some people as early as age 30. Additionally, anyone who has had a severe head injury, head trauma or traumatic brain injury is at an increased risk of dementia. Those who experience repeated head injuries, such as boxers, football players and combat veterans, are also thought to be at a larger danger of dementia.

Six Pillars of a Brain Healthy Lifestyle:

To stay mentally sharp into old age, give your brain the best chance to be healthy and hearty by including the following six pillars as much as possible:

Active social life	Healthy diet	Mental stimulation
Quality sleep	Regular exercise	Stress management

Follow a Healthy Diet:

Avoid trans fats and saturated fats	Eat 4-6 small meals throughout the day, rather than 3 large meals	Eat a heart-healthy diet	Eat across the rainbow
Enjoy daily cups of tea	Follow a Mediterranean diet	Get plenty of omega-3 fats	[See Source (D) below for specific details.]

Supplements to consider for improved/preserved brain health are folic acid, vitamin B12, vitamin D, magnesium and fish oil. Obtaining fish oil from a good clean source cannot be overemphasized enough to avoid potential toxicity of heavy metals, PCBs and pesticides. Furthermore, studies of vitamin E, ginkgo biloba, coenzyme Q10, and turmeric have yielded less conclusive results, but may also be beneficial in the prevention or delay of Alzheimer’s and dementia symptoms. Make sure to discuss medication interactions with a nutritionally-informed health care provider and review current literature to make the best decision about costs and benefits of dietary supplements.

Consider products you are applying to your skin as well. For example, avoid heavy metals and other hazardous substances (e.g., aluminum, alum and parabens) which are probably in your antiperspirant unless you have deliberately sought an aluminum-free/paraben free alternative. Heavy metals and parabens are absorbed into your bloodstream and can cause many health problems including dementia.

Additionally, because all metal cookware leach into your food, particularly if you cook acidic food, like tomato sauce, it is best to avoid aluminum. Cookware leaching into foods is sometimes a good thing because they supply necessary minerals such as iron and copper. Other times, as in the case of stainless steel, an inert substance, it’s harmless. Some people suggest that all of your aluminum and, while you’re at it, Teflon-coated cookware, is thrown out.

Hope for the Future

If all goes smoothly, by mid 2013, a silicon-rich mineral water (Spritzer) is expected to be sold in the United States. One liter of this water per day gives hope to individuals with Alzheimer's disease that one’s body burden of aluminum can be reduced. Stay tuned and think of the implications for prevention that can exist!

Follow the above guidelines and “Protect Your Mellon (i.e., your brain)!”

Sources Used:

- As with most other health topics, there is a lot to learn and know. Listed below are some links used:
- (A) http://www.alz.org/downloads/facts_figures_2012.pdf
(B) http://www.prohealth.nl/medical/behandelcentrum_3.html
(C) <http://www.alzinfo.org/03/articles/prevention-and-wellness/prevention-and-wellness-4%20%E2%80%8E>
(D) http://www.helpguide.org/elder/alzheimers_prevention_slowing_down_treatment.htm
(E) http://www.lef.org/magazine/mag2012/nov2012_DHA_Essential_Brain_Food_01.htm
(F) <http://www.keele.ac.uk/pressreleases/2012/asilicon-richmineralwatertherapyforalzheimersdisease.php>

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