

5 WAYS TO PREVENT DEMENTIA

Nothing strikes fear in the minds of Baby Boomers more than the prospect of developing dementia. Whether it's Alzheimer's, vascular dementia, or another form of the memory-robbing condition, dementia is a cruel disease that affects an estimated 1 out of every 6 women and 1 out of every 10 men over the age of 55. And it impacts not only the person suffering from the disease, but family and caregivers as well.

But there could be a silver lining for those approaching their golden years. Even though no drug therapy or treatment regimen has yet been found that will definitely prevent dementia, a 2017 study suggested that 35 percent of all dementia cases could be tied to lifestyle choices. So what can you do to guard against this devastating disease? Here are five ways you can reduce your risk, starting today.



1 Eat smart. What you eat can play a critical role in the development of dementia. Two recent studies found less accumulation of beta-amyloid protein—a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease—in middle-aged people who followed a Mediterranean diet filled with fresh fruits and vegetables, fish, lean meat, and olive oil compared to people eating a Western diet filled with processed foods.



2 Maintain a healthy weight.

After analyzing data from 1.3 million people throughout Europe and the United States, researchers at the University College of London concluded that people with a high body mass index (BMI) are more likely to develop dementia than those with a normal weight. Other research published in the journal *Cureus* suggests that obesity not only decreases the blood supply to the brain, but also increases fat cells that damage the brain's white matter. Combined, these factors can lead to a loss of brain function.



3 Get moving. Several prospective studies show that regular exercise can reduce the risk of developing dementia by about 30 percent. For Alzheimer's disease specifically, the risk was reduced by 45 percent. To get all the brain-boosting benefits from exercise, strive to get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week and be sure to include a combination of aerobic and resistance training.



4 Train your brain.

Exercising your mind—think computer games, crossword puzzles, learning new mental skills—is one of the easiest ways to improve cognition and help prevent dementia. During one study involving more than 2,800 adults 65 and older, researchers found that brain-training activities designed to engage memory, reasoning, and speed of processing reduced the risk of dementia by an average of 29 percent.

Sage. Another botanical with brain-boosting powers, sage has been shown to enhance cognition and protect against dementia and other neurodegenerative problems. Preliminary research suggests that the compounds in sage may help protect against the damage triggered by the accumulation of beta-amyloid protein. These compounds may also protect neurons, guard against oxidative stress, and keep inflammation in check. In a four-month, randomized, double-blind study of 42 patients with mild to moderate Alzheimer's, those taking sage experienced significant improvements in their cognitive function compared to those taking a placebo.



5 Take brain-boosting supplements.

Research shows that several key nutrients can lower the risk of dementia. Here are four of the most effective:

Vitamin D. Studies show that low levels of this critical nutrient play a role in the development of dementia. During one observational study, an international team of researchers evaluated more than 1,600 seniors for six years. They found those who were severely deficient in vitamin D were more than twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia than those with adequate levels. Participants who were only mildly deficient had an increased risk of 53 percent, while those who were severely deficient had a 125 percent higher risk of developing dementia. Because an estimated 40-75 percent of all adults are vitamin D deficient, supplementation is essential.

Rosemary. This fragrant herb has long been tied to memory. In fact, in the play *Hamlet*, William Shakespeare wrote, "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance." Little did he know just how true that was. Recent studies show that rosemary extract can protect against the degeneration of neurons by boosting antioxidant activity within the brain. That, in turn, has the potential to improve memory in both older people and those with traumatic brain injury. During one double-blind trial, 80 people were assigned to consume

water spiked with rosemary or a placebo drink before taking part in a series of computerized cognitive tests. Using near-infrared spectroscopy, the researchers noted that those drinking the rosemary water not only had an uptick in cognitive function, they also experienced a better use of oxygen within the brain.



It's never too early—or too late—to take steps to protect against cognitive decline and dementia. Adopting these five strategies could help you maximize your brain power and keep you sharp for a lifetime, no matter what your age. ■

Curcumin. This colorful spice, derived from turmeric, may protect the brain in multiple ways. According to findings in the journal *GeroScience*, curcumin can protect against cognitive impairment by reducing oxidative stress and inflammation in the brain. Other research has shown that curcumin also improves blood flow within the brain. One drawback to most curcumin supplements, however, is that they are not well-absorbed by the body. Fortunately, a highly absorbable form of curcumin was found to prevent cognitive decline compared to a placebo in one, year-long clinical trial. Listed on labels as either BCM-95 or Curcugreen, this proprietary curcumin is blended with turmeric essential oil containing ar-turmerone complex for optimal absorption.

