

Strategy Overview

A research-based health article that gives readers practical ways to support brain health while avoiding unsupported promises about Alzheimer’s prevention.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Adults interested in protecting their long-term brain health, including people concerned about cognitive decline and Alzheimer’s disease.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Educate readers about six practical lifestyle habits that may support brain health and address modifiable risk factors.

READER NEED

People want realistic ways to support cognitive health but may encounter exaggerated or misleading claims about Alzheimer’s prevention.

CONTENT STRATEGY

Present research-based health information in an accessible list format, with practical suggestions readers can incorporate into daily life.

RESEARCH APPROACH

Use authoritative health sources to discuss diet, exercise, sleep, learning, stress, social connection, and cognitive reserve without promising prevention.

TONE AND POSITIONING

Informative, encouraging, and medically responsible—balancing actionable guidance with clear qualifications and professional-care recommendations.

6 Lifestyle Habits That May Reduce Your Risk of Alzheimer’s Disease

Lifestyle choices can support brain health. Here are six habits that research suggests may help lower the risk of cognitive decline and dementia.



Alzheimer's disease is a growing public health challenge. In 2025, an estimated 7.2 million Americans aged 65 and older were living with Alzheimer’s dementia. Worldwide, about 57 million people were living with dementia in 2021, and Alzheimer’s disease is the most common cause of dementia.^{[1][2]}

Although there is no cure, some medications can help manage symptoms, and newer treatments may slow disease progression in certain people with early Alzheimer’s disease. Researchers are also studying how modifiable health and lifestyle factors may influence risk.^{[3][5]}

Age, genetics, and other health conditions play major roles. No diet, exercise plan, or mental activity can guarantee prevention. However, healthy habits can support brain and heart health, as well as overall well-being.^[5]

Start Supporting Brain Health Now

Damage associated with Alzheimer’s disease may begin a decade or more before memory and thinking problems appear. Building healthy routines earlier in life may support long-term health, but it is never too late to make beneficial changes.^[4]

Here are six habits that may support brain health and help address some modifiable risk factors.

1. Maintain a Healthy Diet

A balanced eating pattern supports both heart and brain health. Focus on vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts, fish, and lean proteins while limiting heavily processed foods, excess added sugar, and saturated fat.^[6]

The MIND diet combines elements of the Mediterranean and DASH diets and was developed by nutritional epidemiologist Dr. Martha Clare Morris. Some studies have linked it to slower cognitive decline or a lower risk of Alzheimer’s disease, but findings are not conclusive, and no specific diet has been proven to prevent the disease.^[6]

[Watch this short video on the MIND diet.](#)

Start small by adding leafy greens, berries, whole grains, or nuts to meals you already enjoy.

2. Exercise Regularly

Regular physical activity supports cardiovascular health and may help maintain some aspects of cognitive function. Researchers have not established that exercise prevents Alzheimer’s disease, but an active lifestyle is consistently associated with healthier aging.^[5]

Choose activities you can sustain, such as:

- Brisk walking, jogging, or running
- Cycling or swimming
- Dancing
- Strength training
- Balance and flexibility exercises

Start at a level that feels safe. If you have health concerns, speak with a healthcare professional before beginning a new exercise routine.

3. Get Consistent, Restful Sleep

Sleep supports memory, learning, and overall brain health. Poor or irregular sleep is associated with cognitive problems, although researchers are still studying whether improving sleep directly lowers the risk of Alzheimer’s disease.^[8]

Helpful sleep habits include:

- Keep a consistent sleep and wake schedule
- Create a relaxing nightly routine
- Limit bright screens, caffeine, and heavy meals close to bedtime
- Keep the bedroom dark, quiet, and comfortable

Persistent sleep problems can have many causes. Discuss ongoing insomnia, loud snoring, or excessive daytime sleepiness with a healthcare professional.

4. Keep Learning

Mentally stimulating activities may help build cognitive reserve—the brain’s ability to adapt and continue functioning despite age-related changes or disease.^[11]

Choose activities that challenge you and remain enjoyable, such as:

- Reading and writing
- Drawing or painting
- Learning a language
- Playing an instrument
- Solving puzzles or learning a new skill

These activities can support lifelong learning and healthy aging, but they cannot prevent Alzheimer’s disease.^[7]

5. Manage Stress

Occasional stress is a normal part of life. Chronic stress, however, can affect sleep, mood, blood pressure, and daily routines—all of which can influence overall health.

Helpful strategies may include:

- Regular physical activity
- Mindfulness or breathing exercises
- Scheduling breaks and enjoyable activities
- Talking with trusted friends or family members
- Seeking professional support when stress becomes difficult to manage

Researchers continue to study the relationship between chronic stress and dementia. Stress-management practices should be viewed as part of an overall healthy lifestyle, not as a guaranteed way to prevent Alzheimer’s disease.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, is one structured approach to mindfulness practice.^[10]

6. Build and Maintain Social Connections

Social isolation and loneliness are associated with adverse health outcomes and a higher risk of cognitive decline and dementia. Meaningful social activity can support emotional well-being and healthy aging.^[9]

Ways to stay connected include:

- Stay in touch with family and friends
- Join a club, class, or volunteer group
- Participate in community events
- Connect with people at work, school, or a place of worship
- Build relationships with neighbors

Quality matters as much as quantity. Focus on relationships and activities that feel supportive, purposeful, and enjoyable.

Understanding Cognitive Reserve

Education, mentally demanding work, hobbies, and social engagement may contribute to cognitive reserve. Cognitive reserve refers to the brain’s ability to use flexible networks and strategies when responding to age-related changes.^[11]

Cognitive reserve does not prevent brain disease, but it may help explain why some people maintain cognitive function longer than others with similar brain changes.^[11]

Protect Your Brain Health

No single habit can prevent Alzheimer’s disease. A stronger approach is to combine healthy routines with regular medical care and management of conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, hearing loss, and depression.^[5]

Start with one realistic change this week. Small, sustainable habits can support cognitive and overall health over time.

If you or someone you know is experiencing memory or thinking changes that interfere with daily life, speak with a healthcare professional.

Learn More

- [Alzheimer's Association](#)
- [National Institute on Aging](#)
- [Alzheimer's Disease International](#)
- [World Health Organization — Dementia](#)

Important: This article is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical advice. Speak with a qualified healthcare professional about your health and individual risk factors.

Sources

- [1] [Alzheimer's Association. 2025 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures.](#)
- [2] [World Health Organization. Dementia.](#)
- [3] [National Institute on Aging. How Is Alzheimer's Disease Treated?](#)
- [4] [National Institute on Aging. What Happens to the Brain in Alzheimer's Disease?](#)
- [5] [National Institute on Aging. Preventing Alzheimer's Disease: What Do We Know?](#)
- [6] [National Institute on Aging. What Do We Know About Diet and Prevention of Alzheimer's Disease?](#)
- [7] [National Institute on Aging. Cognitive Health and Older Adults.](#)
- [8] [National Institute on Aging. Does Poor Sleep Raise Risk for Alzheimer's Disease?](#)
- [9] [National Institute on Aging. Loneliness and Social Isolation—Tips for Staying Connected.](#)
- [10] [UMass Memorial Health Center for Mindfulness. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction.](#)
- [11] [Stern, Y. Cognitive Reserve in Ageing and Alzheimer's Disease. The Lancet Neurology, 2012.](#)