

How to reduce your risk of dementia

As our population ages, cases of dementia in Canada are expected to double by 2031. Currently, between 6% and 15% of Canadians aged 65 and older live with some form of dementia.

The good news is that there are things you can do to help reduce your risk.

What is dementia?

Dementia is not a specific disease, but rather a set of symptoms caused by neurological disorders. These include memory loss, difficulties with speaking, thinking and problem-solving that can reduce a person's ability to perform everyday activities. Many diseases can cause dementia. The most common one is Alzheimer's disease, but it can also affect people who suffer from head trauma, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease and vascular dementia due to strokes.

Almost 40% of people over the age of 65 experience some form of memory loss^[2]; however, dementia is different. Not being able to recall details about recent events, family members and words are not part of normal memory loss and aging.

Reduce your risk

Making healthy lifestyle choices can go a long way in keeping your brain as healthy as possible as you age. Your brain plays a role in everything that you do, and it needs to be looked after just like the rest of your body. Here are a few tips to keep your brain healthy and strong:

- Eat healthy - Include food high in omega-3 fats, like nuts, flax and oily fish and a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. Healthy dietary choices not only improve your general health, in the long-term, nutritious food helps maintain brain function and slows memory decline.
- Be active - Join a fitness class or walking group. Even moderate physical activity promotes the circulation of blood to the brain. This nourishes the cells with nutrients and oxygen, and may even encourage the development of new cells.
- Stay social - Staying connected socially helps you stay connected mentally. Research shows that regularly interacting with others may lessen your risk of developing dementia.
- Challenge yourself - Stimulate your brain with puzzles and word or number games. By approaching daily routines in new ways, you engage new or little-used mental pathways.

Early diagnosis can reduce the risks associated with dementia. It also allows both families and people with dementia to learn about the disease, talk about expectations and plan for the future. If you think you or someone you care about may have dementia, it is important to see a doctor as soon as possible.

For more information about life and health benefit options to protect you and your family, visit www.otip.com/YourPlan call **1-888-892-4935**.

[1] <http://healthy Canadians.gc.ca/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/disease-maladie/dementia-demence/index-eng.php>

[2] <http://www.alzheimer.ca/en/About-dementia/What-is-dementia/Normal-aging-vs-dementia>