



# Brain Health As You Age

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- Aging well depends on your:
  - Genes
  - Environment
  - Lifestyle
- Healthy lifestyle choices may help you maintain a healthy body and brain



- As you age, you may find:
  - Increased difficulty finding words
  - More problems in multi-tasking
  - Mild decreases in ability to pay attention
- You can still:
  - Learn new things
  - Create new memories
  - Improve vocabulary and language skills



- How to compensate for cognitive decline
  - Write things down
  - Use electronic reminders, organizational systems, pill boxes, etc.
  - Focus on one thing at a time
  - Allow enough time for tasks
  - Ask others to slow down when presenting information to you.
  - Ask for information in writing

- Warning Signs
  - Memory loss that disrupts daily life
  - Challenges planning or solving problems
  - Difficulty completing familiar tasks
  - Confusion with time or place
  - Trouble with visual images and spatial relationships
  - New problems with words in speaking or writing
  - Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
  - Decreased or poor judgment
  - Withdrawal from work or social activities
  - Changes in mood and personality

*Source: Alzheimer's Association [alz.org/10signs](http://alz.org/10signs)*

- Possible risks or threats to brain health:
  - Some medicines, or improper use of them
  - Smoking
  - Excessive use of alcohol
  - Heart disease, diabetes, or other health problems
  - Poor diet
  - Insufficient sleep
  - Lack of physical activity
  - Little social activity and being alone most of the time

- Some medicines – and combinations of them – can affect your thinking and the way your brain works.
- Talk with your health care provider about the drugs you take and possible side effects on memory, sleep and brain function.



- Benefits of quitting smoking at any age:
  - Lower risk of heart attacks, stroke and lung disease
  - Better blood circulation
  - Not exposing others to second-hand smoke





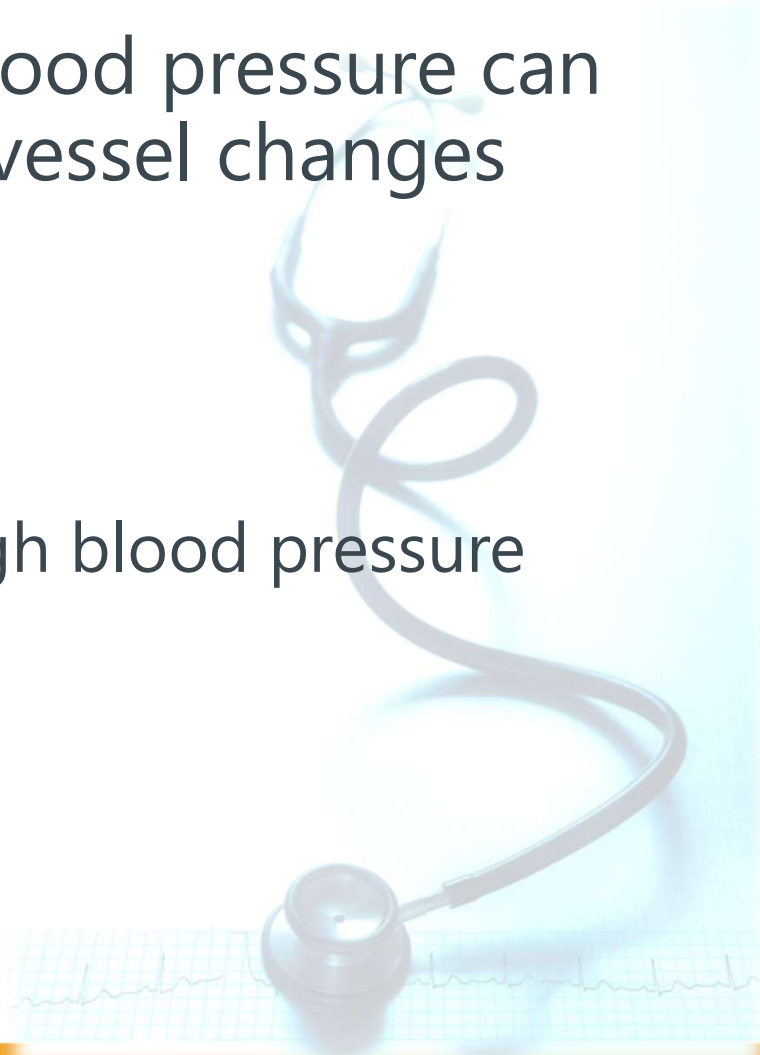
- Alcohol's effect on brain health:
  - Slow or impaired communication among brain cells, even with moderate use
  - Poor driving, slurred speech, fuzzy memory, drowsiness, dizziness
  - Long-term changes to balance, memory and emotions, coordination, and body temperature



- Common conditions that affect brain health:
  - Heart disease, high blood pressure
  - Diabetes
  - Stroke
  - Traumatic brain injury
  - Depression
  - Sleep problems
  - Alzheimer's disease



- Heart disease and high blood pressure can lead to stroke and blood vessel changes related to dementia.
- How to reduce risk:
  - Control cholesterol and high blood pressure
  - Exercise
  - Eat healthy foods
  - Quit smoking
  - Limit use of alcohol



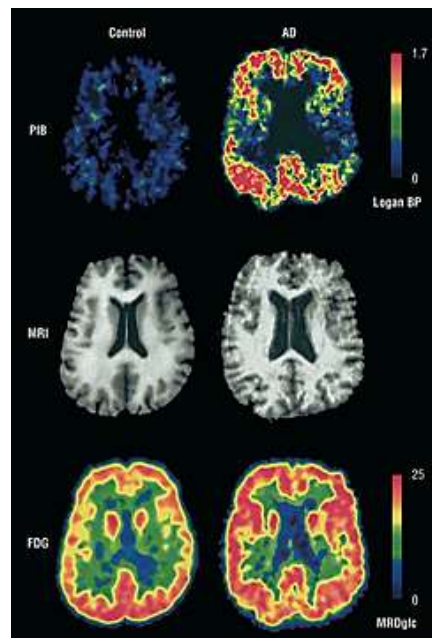
- Diabetes damages blood vessels throughout your body, including your brain.
- Increases risk for stroke and heart attack
- May increase risk for memory problems and Alzheimer's disease
- Maintaining a healthy weight through physical activity and healthy eating can prevent or control type 2 diabetes

- Older adults are at higher risk of falling and other accidents that can cause brain injury.
  
- How to reduce risk:
  - Exercise to improve balance and coordination
  - Take a fall prevention class
  - Make your home safer
  - Review medicines and vision with your health care provider
  - Wear safety belts and helmets
  - Get enough sleep

- Depression
  - Feelings of sadness or loss of interest in favored activities that last for weeks at a time
  - Not a normal part of aging
  - Some medicines can cause depression
  - Confusion or attention problems caused by depression can sometimes look like dementia
  - Treatment can involve therapy and medicine

- Sleep Apnea
  - Short pauses in breathing while sleeping
  - Can lead to injury, high blood pressure, stroke, or memory loss, all of which can affect brain health
  - Treatment begins with lifestyle changes, such as avoiding alcohol, losing weight, and quitting smoking
  - Use of special devices, ordered by your doctor, may also help

- Alzheimer's disease is a buildup of harmful proteins in the brain, the death of brain cells, and loss of connections among them.





- Known risks:
  - Age
  - Genes, in some people
  - Head injury
- Suspected risks:
  - Heart disease
  - High blood pressure at mid-life
  - Lack of physical activity
  - Depression
  - Diabetes

- Some therapies can treat Alzheimer's symptoms. They do not slow down the disease's changes in the brain.
- Some approaches show promise in reducing risk of cognitive decline or Alzheimer's, but need more testing:
  - Exercise
  - Healthy diet
  - Controlling high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes
  - Cognitive "brain" training

- Actions that may help protect your brain health:
  - Take care of your health
  - Eat healthy foods
  - Be active
  - Learn new things
  - Connect with family, friends, and communities



- Take care of your health:
  - Get recommended health screenings
  - Manage health problems like diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol
  - Consult with your health care provider to make sure your medicines are right for you
  - Reduce risk for brain injuries due to falls, and other types of accidents
  - Quit smoking



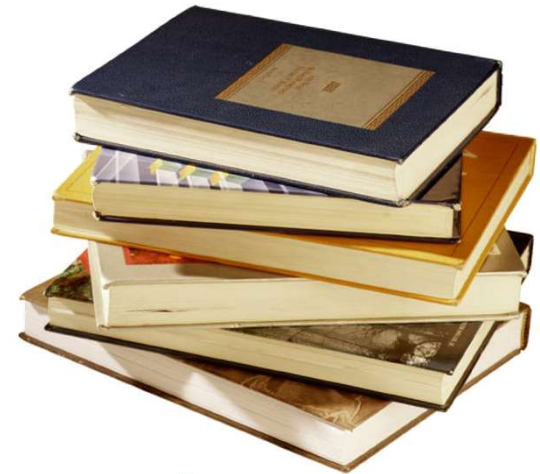
- Eat healthily:
  - Fruits and vegetables
  - Whole grains
  - Lean meats, fish, poultry
  - Low-fat or non-fat dairy products
  - Less solid fat, sugar and salt
  - Proper portion sizes
  - Adequate fluids





- Get moving:
  - Physical activity may reduce risk of diabetes, heart disease, depression, and stroke, prevent falls, and improve connections among brain cells
  - Get at least 150 minutes of exercise each week. Move about 30 minutes on most days.
  - Join programs that can help you learn to move safely.
  - Check with your health care provider if you haven't been active and want to start a vigorous exercise program.

- Keep your mind active:
  - Do mentally stimulating activities
  - Read books and magazines
  - Play games
  - Learn new things
  - Take or teach a class
  - Be social through work or volunteering



- Stay connected:
  - People who have meaningful activities, like volunteering, say they feel happier and healthier
  - Social activities are linked to reduced risk for some health problems, including dementia
  - Join in social and other programs through your Area Agency on Aging, Senior Center, and other community organizations





- Pick one thing you can do that may help your brain
- Think of small, first steps such as:
  - Taking a 10-minute walk a few times a week
  - Adding one serving of vegetables each day
  - Making an appointment for health screenings or a physical exam
- Write down what you will do and when
- Get support from family, friends, or community groups!

- Community programs:
  - Contact a local Area Agency on Aging (AAA)
  - Contact a local Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC)
  - Or, go to <http://eldercare.gov>
- National Institutes of Health: <http://nih.gov>
- National Institute on Aging at NIH: <http://nia.nih.gov>
- ClinicalTrials.gov, a service of NIH:  
<http://clinicaltrials.gov>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
  - <http://www.cdc.gov/aging>
  - <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity>

Sources for this presentation include:



## PROGRAMS

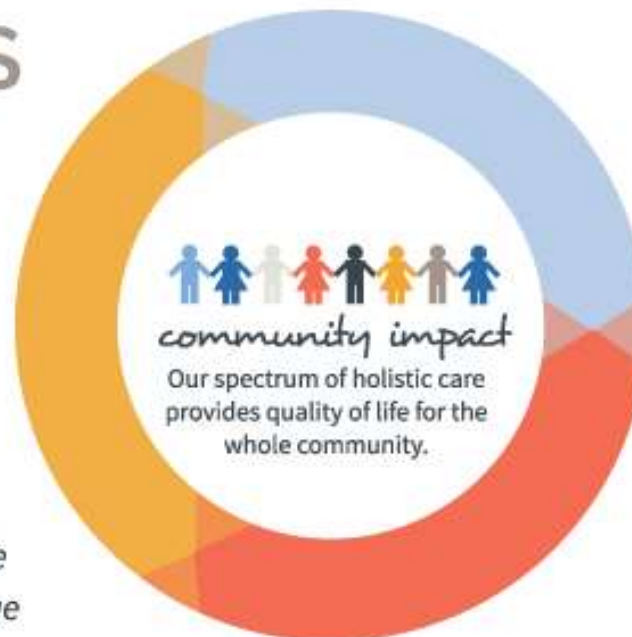
### CARE

#### Early Stage

- *Mind and Body Workshop*
- *Reconnections*
- *SHARE Program*

#### Adult Day Health Center

- *Blue Group, early to mid stage*
- *Orange Group, moderate stage*
- *Coral Group, late stage*



### EDUCATE

- Classes for Caregivers
- Community Workshops
- Professional Training
- Caregiving at a Glance Guide

### SUPPORT

- Support Groups
- Consultations
- Memory Screening
- Memory Cafe
- Caregiver Cruise



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