

Alzheimer's Awareness Month

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You can SIRT-ainly decrease your risk!!!!

A new family of proteins appears to play a role in the development of Alzheimer's (diabetes, cancer, and aging, too). Mice with low amounts of these proteins, known as sirtuins (ser-TOO-ins), develop early risk factors for Alzheimer's disease, while mice with high levels of sirtuins had longer lives and retained their brain function into very old age. So, if you're looking for an extra bit of motivation to exercise this winter, here it is: physical activity has been shown to increase the levels of sirtuins in mammals, which can lead to lower risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Now you have one more reason to take your brain out for a walk; it will thank you later.



Statistics and Risk Factors

- 5.3 million people in the U.S. are affected by Alzheimer's disease
- About 5 percent of men and women ages 65 to 74 have Alzheimer's disease, and nearly half of those age 85 and older may have the disease.
- Alzheimer's has recently surpassed diabetes as the 6th leading cause of death in the U.S.
- Individuals with Alzheimer's disease make up about 13% of the Medicare population but still account for almost 35% of Medicare spending!

Don't be another statistic. Several factors increase your risk for dementia. The following are can be changed through lifestyle modifications to reduce risk. You don't have to sit idly by, take preventative action to minimize these risk factors!

- *Alcohol consumption • Atherosclerosis • Blood Pressure*
- *Cholesterol • Type-2 Diabetes • Smoking • Elevated levels of the amino acid Homocysteine*

Dementia and Alzheimer's Prevention

Take these steps to lower your risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

Improve your cardiovascular health: Due to the high correlation between heart disease and dementia, staying physically fit is an important first line of defense.

Exercise regularly: In addition to boosting your cardiovascular health, exercise boosts blood flow and oxygen delivery to your brain cells.

Eat a heart healthy diet: A balanced nutrition improves brain circulation, keeping you at the top of your game.

Stay mentally active: Reading, crossword puzzles, and brainteasers may help, but the real key is learning something **new** to help prevent cognitive decline

Quick Facts on Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia!

- Dementia is not a specific disease, but rather a group of symptoms that interfere with cerebral and social functioning
- Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia
- Alzheimer's is not a normal part of aging
- The risk of developing Alzheimer's increases in the presence of conditions that damage the cardiovascular system, such as heart disease, diabetes, and high cholesterol
- Alzheimer's destroys brain cells and results in impaired thinking and behavior
- Age is the most significant risk factor for Alzheimer's. The prevalence of the disease doubles every 5 years past the age of 65. Young people may suffer from Alzheimer's disease, but it is uncommon.
- Dementia and Alzheimer's have no cure, but symptoms can be treated.

Sources: http://www.alz.org/research/video/video_pages/diet_and_exercise_in_alz.htm; Hokari, et al., *J Appl Physiol* 109:332-340, 2010; Yu & Auwerx, *Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci.* 1173: E10-E19, 2009; Albani, et al., *J Alz Disease* 19: 11-26, 2010; <http://www.cdc.gov/aging/healthybrain/alzheimers.htm>