

# Your Brain Health

Everyday hints and tips for a healthy brain



Did you know that, just like you can improve your physical health through exercise, you can also improve the health of your brain. Leading research suggests that looking after your brain can lower your risk of developing brain diseases such as dementia—meaning it may be possible for you to delay or even prevent the onset of such diseases.

# Understanding risk

Our risk of developing dementia is complicated and changes as we get older but, in most cases, it is caused by a number of different things, some of which can't be changed but many can.

## Can Do

Ground-breaking new research suggests that 40% of cases of dementia can be prevented or delayed by small changes in the way that we live our lives.

Evidence suggests that we can reduce our risk of dementia by wearing correctly fitted hearing aids if we have trouble hearing, moving more, staying social and maintaining a healthy heart.

## Can't Do

Unfortunately, you can't change your genes: Some people will have a higher risk of developing dementia because of their genes. But, even so, dementia is still not inevitable for people with higher genetic risk.

And again, you can't stop growing older: Everyone's risk of developing dementia increases as they get older. But it's not a certainty.

It's never too early or too late to start looking after your brain health and even small changes could make a big difference. Here are a few top tips for staying sharp and keeping your brain in tip top shape.

# Brain health top tips

**Brain Food:** There is no one food which can promise a healthy brain, but most scientists agree that a Mediterranean diet is the best. That's a diet where there is plenty of fruit, vegetables, oily fish, whole grains, nuts, olive oil and also a moderate amount of red wine/dark chocolate, tea and coffee. To keep our brain healthy, we should try to cut back on: red meat, white rice, bread, sugars, full fat dairy and salt.

Good bacteria in our guts may also help keep our brains sharp, so probiotics such as fermented foods, for example pickled vegetables and yogurt; and prebiotic foods such as banana, ginger, broccoli and dark chocolate may help keep our brains healthy

Alcohol: Moderation is the key, stick to no more than one drink a day for women and two for men

**Movement:** Movement is great for the brain. Moving a little is good but moving more is even better. Regular daily walking whether you're going to the shops, exploring the area you live in with your friends or going to an exercise class where you can stretch and get your heart beating can all do wonders for your brain and even memory. We all feel better when we've gone outside for a walk.

**An active mind:** Maintaining life-long learning can keep our brains sharp and make them better able to cope with the damage dementia can cause. So, the more we challenge ourselves, learn new things and stay social the better our brains are at holding off dementia. Brain training and puzzles can improve certain skills, but the best way to keep your brain healthy is to do what you love with the people you love: this may be learning a new skill, joining a club or just visiting friends and family more often.

\* Content developed in partnership between Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership's Dementia United programme and Trafford Council.



**Stay on top of your physical health:** Many aspects of your physical health can have a huge impact on the way your brain works. Things to be particularly aware of are:

**Hearing and vision:** sensory loss has been found to be one of the strongest risk factors for dementia but correctly fitted hearing aids and glasses can reduce this risk.

**Blood pressure:** remember, what's good for the heart is good for the head

**Diabetes:** poorly managed diabetes can impact negatively on your brain

**Smoking:** Smoking is a risk factor for dementia and many other health conditions—Quit today: <https://makesmokinghistory.co.uk/>



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