

Alzheimer's:

WILL IT IMPACT YOUR LIFE?



Worldwide, more than 50 million people are living with Alzheimer's and other types of dementia. Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative brain disease and the most common form of dementia. Dementia is not a specific disease. It's an overall term that describes a group of symptoms.

June is Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month, when the Alzheimer's Association accelerates its efforts to bring nationwide awareness and concern about this disease. You may have seen the "Go Purple" campaign each year with celebrity spokespersons, like Samuel L. Jackson and Rita Wilson, who have had family members impacted by Alzheimer's. They join with thousands of others to spread the word and fight the disease.

Warning Signs

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that memory problems are typically one of the first warning signs of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Here are signs:

- Memory loss that disrupts daily life, such as getting lost in a familiar place or repeating questions.
- Trouble handling money and paying bills.
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure.
- Decreased or poor judgment.
- Misplacing things and inability to retrace steps to find them.
- Changes in mood, personality or behavior.

If you or someone you know has several of the signs, it doesn't necessarily mean it's Alzheimer's disease. However, it's a good reason to talk to a health care provider and get evaluated.

Improve Your Lifestyle for Alzheimer's Prevention

Healthy habits may help ward off Alzheimer's:

EXERCISE.

Numerous studies suggest that staying active may reduce the risk of Alzheimer's, likely by increasing blood flow to the brain and improving the brain's use of oxygen and glucose, as well as building denser blood vessels in the brain. The recommendation is 30 minutes of moderately vigorous aerobic exercise three to four days per week.

EAT A MEDITERRANEAN DIET.

This has been shown to help thwart Alzheimer's or slow its progression. Studies show that even partial adherence to such a diet is beneficial. The Mediterranean diet includes fresh vegetables and fruits, whole grains, olive oil, nuts, legumes, fish and moderate amounts of poultry, eggs, dairy and red wine.

GET ENOUGH SLEEP.

Growing evidence suggests that improved sleep can help prevent Alzheimer's and is linked to greater amyloid clearance from the brain. Aim for seven to eight hours per night.

CHALLENGE YOUR BRAIN.

Studies have found that people who remain intellectually active are less likely to develop dementia, as are those who remain socially engaged. Activities to consider include taking classes just for the stimulation, learning a new language, reading challenging books and learning to play a musical instrument.