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Preventing dementia starts now



Research shows that many factors linked to dementia are within your control. While age and genetics play a role in developing the condition, lifestyle is a significant part of the puzzle. How you live today influences how sharp your mind will be tomorrow.

Know your risk factors. A 2024 report by a *Lancet* Commission highlights fourteen modifiable risk factors that account for up to 48% of dementia cases

worldwide. They include less education, hearing loss, high blood pressure, smoking, obesity, depression, physical inactivity, diabetes, excessive alcohol use, traumatic brain injury, social isolation, air pollution, vision loss, and high cholesterol.

At this point in your life, you may not have control over every single factor, but there is still a lot you can do to help shape your future. And, according to dementia researchers, lifestyle changes are not only more accessible, they may be more effective than the latest drug treatments. Daily choices—not just luck or genes—are proving powerful in prevention.

Stay active. Cognitive resilience comes from being engaged—mentally, socially, and physically. Even if your years in school were brief, keeping your brain stimulated now reduces dementia risk. That might mean learning a new language, volunteering, or joining a book group. Social events also provide novelty and challenge that are good for the brain. Researchers point to the importance of regular physical movement, too. Individuals who regularly walk, dance, garden—are physically active somehow—retain better cognition. And movement also fights obesity.

Manage chronic conditions. Getting high blood pressure, diabetes, and/or high cholesterol under control may require medication. However, the healthy choices that positively affect these diseases also support the brain. Addressing hearing loss is important too. Untreated hearing loss is strongly correlated with dementia, possibly due to the isolation and reduced mental stimulation it can cause. The same goes for vision loss.

Be thoughtful about what you consume. A growing body of research supports the MIND diet—a hybrid of the Mediterranean and DASH diets—as brain friendly. Think leafy greens, nuts, berries, fish, and whole grains. When it comes to alcohol, moderation is key, as is quitting smoking.

If you're curious about genetic factors that might affect your risk, testing can offer some insight. But even with a higher risk, daily habits play a key role in preserving brain health. Lifestyle changes aren't a guarantee, but they are a smart foundation for aging well.

Want help planning for a healthy future?

Call the experts in aging well: 206-456-5155.



Aging Wisdom —
Your Experts in
Aging Well

206-456-5155

Aging Wisdom supports individuals and families in King and south Snohomish Counties as they plan for aging.



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