

6 Ways to Promote Brain Health and Reduce Your Risk of Dementia



Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep

Follow the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines and engage in **150 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week**, in bouts of 10 minutes or more. **Add muscle and bone-strengthening activities** using your major muscle groups at least two days per week. Pick activities that you enjoy so you are more likely to stick with it. Get **7 to 8 hours of good-quality sleep** and **limit sedentary time**.



Weight Management, Diet, and Nutrition

Maintain a healthy weight. Adopt the **Mediterranean Diet** to optimize brain health.

There is no evidence that vitamin and mineral supplementation will promote brain health.



Blood Vessel Health

Actively manage conditions such as **high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes** to promote blood vessel health. High LDL cholesterol has also been shown to be an independent risk factor for dementia.



Smoking and Alcohol Use

Quit smoking and if you drink alcohol, it's better to **drink less**.

Canada's new Guidance on Alcohol and Health notes that any amount over **2 drinks per week** is considered a moderate or higher risk to your health. The more you drink, the higher the health risks.

A standard drink is 142 ml (5 oz.) of wine, 341 ml (12 oz.) bottle or can of beer or 43 ml (1.5 oz.) of liquor.



Brain and Social Activity

Strive to **maintain higher levels of brain activity in mid to late-life**. Being **socially active** is an important predictor of well-being in general and brain health throughout life. For optimum effect, incorporate activities that provide both **cognitive and physical elements** such as yoga or tai chi.



Health Conditions and Drug Side Effects

Hearing loss is a significant risk factor for dementia, and is also associated with increased risk of falls. Protect your ears from excessive noise exposure, get your hearing checked, and use hearing aids if you have hearing loss. **Prevent head injuries** by wearing a seatbelt, wearing a helmet when riding a bike or playing impact sports such as hockey, and reducing your risk of falls. If you have **depression**, get it treated. Reduce your **exposure to air pollution** and second-hand smoke. **Vision loss** can also increase your risk, so have your vision checked and treat conditions such as cataracts. **Manage conditions that lower your oxygen levels**, like heart failure, COPD or sleep apnea.

Watch for medications that have the potential for adverse effects on memory and cognitive function (e.g. **benzodiazepines, 'Z-drug' sleeping pills and certain pain medications** such as those that contain opioids).



Other Resources

iGericare

Learn more about dementia and mild cognitive impairment with free online lessons developed by experts in dementia and online learning at McMaster University.

Visit iGericare.ca

Fountain of Health

Tap into five actions you can take to maximize your health and happiness. Use The Wellness App assess your health and resilience, set doable goals and track your progress.

Visit fountainofhealth.ca

Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines

Canada's first ever 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Adults offer clear direction on what a healthy 24 hours looks like for Canadian adults aged 65 years and older.

Visit csepguidelines.ca

Smoker's Helpline

Access free and personalized tools to help you quit smoking successfully from the Canadian Cancer Society.

Visit smokershelpline.ca

Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health

The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction's evidence-based advice on alcohol to support people in making informed decisions about their health.

Visit ccsa.ca

Brain Health Food Guide

The Brain Health Food Guide, developed by Baycrest, provides practical advice about healthy eating for the aging brain.

Visit Baycrest.org

Hacking Exercise for Health. The Surprising New Science of Fitness

Take this free online course developed by experts from McMaster University to learn more about the right mix between cardio and strength training.

Visit coursera.org/learn/hacking-exercise-health

McMaster Optimal Aging Portal

Your source for healthy aging information you can trust.

Visit mcmasteroptimalaging.org

