Heads Up for Healthier Brains

Aging and Genetics

Two risk factors cannot be controlled: aging and genetics.

Aging:
The most important risk factor is aging. A minimum age needs to be reached for Alzheimer’s disease to develop. People do not get the disease in their teenage years or even in their 20s. It is well-established that aging can impair the body’s self-repair mechanisms. And of course, many of the risk factors increase as one ages, such as blood pressure, stress, and obesity.

Genetics:
There is no doubt that genetics play a role in the disease. Yet, only a small percentage of cases is associated with the specific genes that cause the inherited form of the disease. Risk genes increase the likelihood of developing a disease, but do not guarantee it will happen.

Additional Materials or References:
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What everyone should know about brain health and Alzheimer’s disease

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Charitable registration number: 11878 4925 RR0001

Help For today. Hope For tomorrow...

Find out more - www.alzheimer.ca or contact your local Society.

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Take Action for a Healthier Brain

What you can do to maintain or improve your brain health:

**Challenge Your Brain**
- Keep your brain active every day. Studies show that regularly challenging your brain may reduce your chances of developing Alzheimer’s disease, so it is important to give your brain a regular workout.
- Try something new or change the way you usually do a task, such as brushing your hair with your less dominant hand.
- Play games to challenge your mind - chess, cards, word or number puzzles, jigsaws, crosswords, and memory games.
- Pursue a new interest, learn a language, play a musical instrument, take a course, visit galleries and museums, enjoy old and new hobbies.

**Choose a Healthy Lifestyle**
- A healthy lifestyle is as important to brain health as it is to the rest of your body. Diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol and obesity are all risk factors for dementia. But many simple lifestyle choices will improve your brain health.
- Make healthy food choices: eat a varied diet rich in dark-coloured fruits and vegetables, including foods rich in anti-oxidants, such as blueberries and spinach; and omega 3 oils found in fish and canola oils.
- Be active: regular moderate physical activity helps maintain cardiovascular health and can significantly reduce the risk of heart attacks, stroke and diabetes.
- Track your numbers: keep your blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and weight within recommended ranges. If you have diabetes, it is important to manage it well.
- Reduce stress: practice relaxation, meditation or other stress reduction techniques.
- Choose wisely: quit or avoid smoking and avoid excessive alcohol consumption.
- See your doctor regularly: both for check ups and any specific health concerns. Your doctor is an important partner in maintaining your health.

**Protect Your Head**
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  - Wear an approved helmet when engaging in sporting activities such as skating, skiing, skateboarding, rollerblading and cycling.
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Reducing Your Risk
Alzheimer’s disease develops when the risk factors for the disease combine and reach a level that overwhelms the brain’s ability to maintain and repair itself. So reducing as many of the risk factors as you can makes good sense. By making healthy lifestyle choices, you may be able to reduce your risk and improve your brain’s ability to sustain long-term health.

Will healthy lifestyle choices prevent Alzheimer’s disease? There are no guarantees, but evidence suggests that healthy lifestyles help the brain maintain connections and even build new ones. That means that a healthy brain can withstand illness better. So take action today.

Some risk factors you can’t control, such as your genetic makeup and growing older, but there is a lot you can do that may help reduce your risk of getting the disease. Here are some practical actions you can take to improve your brain health.

The brain is one of your most vital organs, playing a role in every action and every thought. Just like the rest of your body it needs looking after.

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What everyone should know about brain health and Alzheimer’s disease

Aging and Genetics

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Genetics:
There is no doubt that genetics play a role in the disease. Yet, only a small percentage of cases is associated with the specific genes that cause the inherited form of the disease. Risk genes increase the likelihood of developing a disease, but do not guarantee it will happen.

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