



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Be Good to Your Brain this September for World Alzheimer's Month

Vancouver, B.C. — An estimated 44 million people worldwide – including more than 70,000 British Columbians – live with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia. **September is World Alzheimer's Month**, and the Alzheimer Society of B.C. invites all British Columbians to reduce their risk of developing dementia by taking steps to improve and maintain brain health.

While there are some risk factors that can't be controlled, such as growing older and your genetic makeup, a significant and growing body of research proves that it is never too early – or too late – to reduce risk by being good to your brain. "Physical fitness, brain fitness, healthy diet, social activity and protecting your head are all measures that may reduce your risk of dementia."

"The goal is to enter later life with a better developed, healthier brain," says Dr. Howard Feldman, an award-winning Professor of Neurology at UBC and Director of the UBC Hospital Clinic for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders. "By maintaining certain healthy lifestyle habits, we may enhance our cognitive abilities by stimulating networks and connections within the brain. It's never too early to focus on brain health."

Although it is still not possible to talk about absolute prevention, research increasingly confirms that taking steps now may reduce your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia in the future. Most Canadians (78 per cent) think brain health is at least as important as physical health – but aren't sure what it takes to keep their brain in good shape.

Throughout the month the Society will provide tips and ideas to improve brain health. There are many healthy activities that you can easily incorporate into your daily routine. The sooner you start, the better – Alzheimer's is not just an "old person's disease" and defensive action needs to start early in life.

"More dementia research is needed, as there is currently no cure. However, by focusing on maintaining and improving our brain health we may be able to reduce the risk of developing or delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease or another dementia," says Maria Howard, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

Learn more about how to be good to your brain today at: www.alzheimerbc.org/Healthy-Brain.aspx

BACKGROUNDER:

How physical activity helps.

Studies conducted over the past 40 years show that physical activity can slow the effect of aging on the mind as well as the body, helping people stay mentally sharp as they age. Exercise is a significant factor in reducing the risk of developing dementia, in part because it stimulates increased blood flow throughout the body, bringing more oxygen and glucose to the brain.

Choose a healthy diet and lifestyle.

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. Avoid smoking and excessive alcohol consumption.

Challenge your brain by being a life-long learner.

Brain training really works, and its effects are long lasting. Researchers found that when people with an average age of 73 years received 10 brain-training lessons, they did much better on thinking tests and reasoning skills, as well as processing new information and memory. The results of this brain training lasted for up to three years.

Chess, cards, word or number puzzles, jigsaws, crosswords and memory games are also all great ways to stay mentally active.

Be socially active.

Staying connected socially helps you stay connected mentally. Many activities like hockey, dancing, chess, playing cards and Scrabble combine brain stimulus with socializing. These are good ways to interact with others and make friends. Studies have found that friends are even more valuable for good quality social connections than family members.

Protect your head.

Severe brain injuries increase the risk of Alzheimer's disease or other dementias. Reduce your risk by wearing helmets when taking part in sports like cycling, hockey, football and snowboarding.

Education.

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. provides support and information as people learn to cope with dementia. "Heads up: An Introduction to Brain Health" workshops take place regularly in communities throughout the province and via tele-workshop. Visit www.alzheimerbc/Dementia-Education.aspx to learn more.

Want to make a difference in the lives of people affected by dementia AND reduce your risk?

Anything for Alzheimer's is a way for creative, dedicated doers to get involved and make a difference in their community. People can plan their own fundraising event or turn an existing event or challenge into a fundraiser. We make it easy to do your thing and raise funds to support those who face dementia.

Whatever your interests, talents, age or fitness level, there is an *Anything for Alzheimer's* event out there for you! And if you are moving your body, challenging your mind, laughing or socializing with friends or colleagues, then you are also being good to your brain!

For more information about *Anything for Alzheimer's* visit <http://anythingforalzheimers.ca/> and register to do your thing today!

To volunteer with, fundraise for or become an advocate with the Alzheimer Society of B.C., visit www.alzheimerbc.org. The Society is here for B.C. to provide Help for Today... *Hope for Tomorrow...*®

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Campaign hashtag: #BeGoodtoYourBrain

Researchers and Society leaders are available for interview throughout September; look for our profile on Dr. Feldman later this month. Photos and video are also available upon request.

About Dementia

Dementia is a term that describes a general group of brain disorders. Symptoms include the loss of memory, impaired judgment, and changes in behaviour and personality. Dementia is progressive, degenerative and eventually terminal. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, accounting for almost two-thirds of dementias in Canada today.

About the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. provides a provincial network of support and education for families impacted by dementia and people concerned about memory loss. Communities across the province count on the Society for support services, information and education programs, advocacy to improve dementia care in B.C., and to fund research to find the causes and cures. As part of a national federation, the Society is a leading health authority on the disease in Canada.

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