

Dementia: Can You Prevent it?

As I get older, every time I forget something I wonder if dementia is imminent. Forgetfulness is common as we age, but just how forgetful is normal, and what level is more worrisome? We all joke about having “senior moments” but when do the jokes become reality?

What is Dementia

[The Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) describes dementia as the following:

Dementia is not a specific disease but is rather a general term for the impaired ability to remember, think, or make decisions that interferes with doing everyday activities. Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia. Though dementia mostly affects older adults, it is not a part of normal aging

CDC

Excess Protein in the Brain

[Research](#) is showing that excess protein causes a toxic, plaque-like buildup in the brain that kills off brain cells. Known medically as proteinopathies, the group of diseases that exhibit this protein accumulation includes the several forms of dementia.

Normal Aging

CDC assures that these age-related changes in our memory are perfectly normal:

- Occasionally misplacing items

- Struggling to find a word but remembering it later
- Forgetting the name of an acquaintance
- Forgetting the most recent events

This list also includes going upstairs for something, then forgetting why you went upstairs. Phew, I bet that's a pretty common occurrence for many of us within my generation.

Worrisome Symptoms

As well as problems with memory, dementia symptoms include issues with communication, attention, problem-solving or judgment, and behavior or personality changes.

For example, if you get lost in a familiar neighbourhood, forget the name of a close friend or family member, find yourself unable to complete familiar tasks, organize or plan, notice decreased coordination, or start using inappropriate/wrong words in a conversation, you should seek medical help.

Warding off Dementia

Any activity that exercises your brain helps to keep dementia at bay. Referred to as cognitive engagement, this includes reading, puzzles, word games (like Wordle), and more.

Physical exercise also helps as it forces more oxygen into your brain. Low or inadequate levels of oxygen, medically called hypoxia, is defined by the [National Library of Medicine](#) (NLH) as:

Hypoxia, a condition where oxygen supply to tissue is inadequate, induces free radical generation leading to oxidative protein modifications and tissue damage [24–27]. Oxygen supply also acts as a modulator of aging processes [28]. The cerebrovascular disorders and hypoxia-ischemia injuries in the brain are projected as a primary cause of

protein pathologies that leads to cognitive impairment and dementia [29, 30]. In short, hypoxia-ischemia injury in the brain persuades DPMs that can lead to aging, age-associated diseases, and neurodegeneration.

NIH

Social interaction has also been shown to reduce the risk of dementia and slow down its progression if it does happen. Maintaining a healthy weight and blood pressure helps lower the risk of dementia as does avoiding/quitting smoking. Avoiding or reducing [saturated fats](#), salt, and [sugar](#) is key to a healthy diet, which in turn helps maintain that healthy weight.

Do your part to reduce your risk!

photo credit: pexels-photo-8172897