

# Healthy Heart, Healthy Brain

## Steps for Protecting the Heart, Brain, and Body

Over the years, our bodies and brains change. But memory loss that disrupts daily life, or difficulty completing familiar tasks, is not typical. The changes may be signs of early dementia or Alzheimer's.

Learn more about Alzheimer's, dementia, and cognitive decline at [alz.org](http://alz.org).

### Key steps you can take for a healthy heart, brain, and body:

1. **Call your doctor today** for an appointment to talk about how to keep your brain and heart healthy.
2. **Schedule wellness checkups** and health screenings every year. Blood pressure and diabetes screenings are usually free with health insurance or Medicare Part B.
3. **Exercise each day.**
4. **Stop smoking.**
5. **Get help** managing high blood pressure, diabetes, high blood cholesterol, and depression or anxiety.
6. **Protect your head.** Falls are the number one cause of head injury in older adults.
7. **Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables** and foods low in salt and sugar.
8. **If you have trouble** with memory or forgetfulness that makes it hard to get through the day, see your doctor right away.

You can do things today to protect your brain and heart health. These steps may help reduce risk for cognitive decline and dementia.

**Over 5 million  
Americans have  
Alzheimer's disease**

**people  
aged 65 and older have  
Alzheimer's in**

People with heart disease, high blood pressure, or diabetes have a much higher risk of developing Alzheimer's or other dementias.



*Turn over for your checklist to help keep your heart, brain, and body healthy.*

# Checklist: Keep Your Heart and Brain Healthy

Your heart and brain are connected. Arteries that take blood away from the heart flow all through the body, including the brain, feeding it with oxygen and energy.

Healthy habits help keep arteries and veins from becoming clogged, which can harm the heart and cause strokes.

## ✓ WORKING WITH YOUR DOCTOR

- Make an appointment** for health screening tests and wellness checkups every year. They are usually free with health insurance or Medicare Part B.
- Have your blood pressure checked** regularly and know your numbers. A blood pressure of less than 120/80 mmHg is normal.
- Ask your doctor** to go over how to measure and track your own blood pressure results. Ask where you can go in your community to check your blood pressure yourself.
- Have your cholesterol checked** regularly and know your numbers. Talk to your doctor about what you can do if your cholesterol is high.
- If you do not have diabetes**, have your blood sugar level checked regularly. Keep your blood sugar levels under control to stay healthy.
- If you do have diabetes**, have your blood sugar and A1C levels checked regularly, and work with your doctor to get them to normal levels. Your A1C should be less than 5.7%.
- Talk with your doctor** about your medicines and vitamins to make sure they do not cause problems with your memory, sleep, or cognition.

## ✓ WORKING ON YOUR OWN

- Be active** or walk every day. Try to get at least 1½ -2 hours of exercise each week.
- Take your medicine** for blood pressure and diabetes even if you feel good.
- If you smoke**, stop now to reduce your risk for stroke and dementia. Talk to your doctor if you need help quitting.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables** and less salt and sugar.
- If you are overweight**, try to lose weight with exercise and a healthy diet. Losing even a few pounds can make a difference. Talk to your doctor for help.
- Read food labels** to see how much salt (sodium) or fat is in your food. If you don't know how to read food labels, ask your doctor for help.
- Limit alcoholic drinks**. No more than one drink per day for women and no more than two for men. Talk to your doctor if you need help.
- Get at least seven hours of sleep** each night. Talk to your doctor if you have trouble sleeping.
- Keep your brain active**. Go out and visit with people in your community, take classes, go to local events, play games, and stay active.

*Original messaging developed by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, the International Association for Indigenous Aging, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

*This communication is supported by Cooperative Agreement #5 NU58DP006115, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The findings and conclusions in this product are those of the Alzheimer's Association and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.*