

Brain Aging and Memory Loss



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This year, the Annual Meeting of the American Society for Nutrition featured a symposium where the increase in dementia rates in the U.S. was discussed. The incidence of Alzheimer's disease grew an alarming 68% between 2000 and 2010. However, studies suggest that a large percentage of dementia cases could possibly be prevented through good nutrition and a healthy

lifestyle.

At the center of the discussion was the role of anti-inflammatory nutrition strategies for preventing dementia, including: loss of excess abdominal fat through balanced nutrition and healthy active lifestyle, increased consumption of lutein or dark green leafy vegetables, increased consumption of fish oils, and reduction of hidden vegetable oils in processed foods. The overlap between heart disease risk factors and risk factors for dementia strongly suggest that a comprehensive nutrition approach could be a preventative measure. Here are some key facts on why this is so important:

- In the U.S., an average of 10,000 people each day will reach age 65 for the next twenty years.
- Five million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease at a health care cost of \$259 billion. By 2050 this number is predicted to increase to 16 million at a cost of \$1.1 trillion dollars.
- 80% of patients with Alzheimer's disease also have heart disease, and studies have shown that amyloid plaques— one of the hallmarks of this mental illness, consisting of fragments of hard, insoluble accumulated proteins between the neurons— may be present in the brain without causing symptoms of cognitive decline unless the brain also shows evidence of vascular disease.

Although some risk factors, such as age or genetic predisposition, cannot be changed, recent research indicates that healthier eating habits may preserve brain function and reduce the possibility of dementia.

Modifying our diet –focusing on the roles of antioxidant and anti-inflammatory nutritional strategies– and leading a more active lifestyle help to control abdominal obesity, high blood pressure, poor nutrition, and lack of exercise, can contribute to a healthier brain and overall wellbeing.

Here are a few other useful tips for healthy aging:

Get Regular Physical Activity

This can help you prevent, delay, and manage chronic diseases. It also lessens your risk of falling, improves balance and stamina, reduces arthritis pain and disability, and helps your brain stay healthy. Aim for moderate physical activity (like brisk walking or gardening) for at least 150 minutes a week, suggests the CDC.

Quit Smoking

Doing so lowers the risk of serious health problems, such as heart disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes, and lung disease, as well as premature death—even for longtime smokers.

Engage in enjoyable cognitively stimulating activities

This will help you maintain your brain health and reduce the risk of cognitive decline as you get older, states AARP. There is a world of possibilities: tai-chi, photography classes, cooking, learning a new language, creative writing, etc. The world is your oyster!

We're confident in what the future will bring: as the scientific community is increasingly invested in this topic, remarkable results on preventing dementia will soon be a reality.