Your Brain Health

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Dementia By The Numbers

- More than **5.8 million** American adults are living with Alzheimer’s.

- Alzheimer’s disease is **6th leading cause of death** in the United States.

- **1 in 10** adults age > 65 / **1 in 3** adults age > 85

- **2/3** are women

- **1 in 3** seniors die from some form of dementia

- Every **65 seconds** someone within the U.S. develops Alzheimer’s

- Estimated that by 2060, **14 million** individuals will develop Alzheimer’s disease in the United States

- On average, the cost of care for dementia in the United States is **$200 billion**
Dementia By The Numbers (cont’d)

• A new case of dementia is diagnosed every 4 seconds worldwide

• Worldwide there are approx. 50 million people with Alzheimer’s or related dementia

• 1 in 4 people with Alzheimer’s have been diagnosed

• Alzheimer’s and dementia is most common in Western Europe and USA is close behind.

• Alzheimer’s is least prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa

• By 2050 the average costs associated with dementia could reach $1.1 trillion
African Americans & Alzheimer’s disease

- Age is the number one factor for the greatest risk of Alzheimer’s

- Alzheimer’s is the 4th leading cause of death among older African Americans

- African Americans are 2-3 times more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to develop Alzheimer’s disease and are less likely to recognize the signs and symptoms

- 20% of Americans with Alzheimer’s are African Americans
Cognitive Health

• The ability to think clearly, learn and remember

• Other important components:
  • Motor function – how well you make and control movements
  • Emotional function – how well you interpret and respond to emotions
  • Sensory function – how well you feel and respond to sensation of touch, including pressure, pain and temperature
What Can You Do to Maintain Cognitive Health?

• Physical health
• Eat healthy foods
• Be physically active
• Keep your mind active
• Stay connected with social activities
• Reduce risk factors
• Memory screenings
Your Physical Health

- Get recommended health screenings
- Manage chronic health problems (diabetes, high blood pressure, depression, high cholesterol)
- Consult with your health care provider about the medicines you take and their possible side effects
- Limit alcohol use
- Quit smoking
- Get enough sleep, generally 7 – 8 hours
Eat Healthy Foods

- Fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fish, poultry, low fat or non-fat dairy products
- Limit solid fats, sugar, and salt
- Control portion sizes
- Drink enough water and other fluids
- MIND diet (combination of the Mediterranean and DASH [Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension])
Be Physically Active

- Exercise
- Walk
- Bike
- Yoga
- Use weights

- Dance
- Swim
- Garden
- Household chores
Keep Your Mind Active

• Be intellectually engaged
  • Learn a new skill
• Enjoy a hobby, work or volunteer
• Formal cognitive training also adds benefits
• Activities may protect the brain by establishing “cognitive reserve”
Stay Connected with Social Activities

- Connect with other people
- Visit with family and friends via video chats (e.g., FaceTime, Skype, Zoom), text messaging, emails, phone, social media
- Join programs through your area Agency on Aging, senior center or other community organizations—including AFA (virtual activities on Facebook)!
Reduce Risks to Cognitive Health

• Genetic, environmental and lifestyle factors all influence cognitive health
• Genetic factors are passed down (inherited) from parent to child and cannot always be completely controlled, but you can be proactive
• Most environmental and lifestyle factors can be changed because you can control them
Risk Factors You Can Control

• Managing your health
• Preventing brain injuries/safety in physical surroundings
• Lack of physical activity
• Medications you take
• Poor diet
• Smoking
• Drinking too much alcohol
• Not getting enough sleep
• Little social activity and being alone most of the time
Health Problems

Many health conditions affect the brain and can pose risks to cognitive function.

- **Heart disease and high blood pressure** – can lead to stroke and changes in blood vessels related to dementia
- **Diabetes** – damages blood vessels throughout the body, including the brain; associated with increased risk of Alzheimer’s
- **Stroke** – can damage blood vessels in the brain and increase risk of vascular dementia
- **Depression** – can lead to confusion or attention problems; linked to dementia

It’s important to prevent or seek treatment for these health problems. They affect your brain as well as your body!
Brain Injuries

- Older adults are at higher risk of falls, car accidents, and other accidents
- Alcohol and certain medicines can affect a person’s ability to drive safely and increase the risk of accidents

✓ Learn about and deal with risks for falls
✓ Participate in fall prevention programs
✓ Wear a helmet and seat belts to help prevent head injuries
Lack of Physical Activity

- Lack of exercise and other physical activity may increase your risk of diabetes, heart disease, depression, and stroke – all of which can harm the brain.
- Physical activity has been linked to improved cognitive performance and reduced risk for Alzheimer’s disease.
Medicines

• Some medicines, and combination of medicines, can affect a person’s thinking and the way the brain works (causing confusion, memory loss, hallucinations and delusions in older adults)

• Can interact with food, dietary supplements, alcohol and other substances.

• Consult with your doctor
Poor Diet

• A number of studies link eating certain foods with keeping the brain healthy – and suggest that other foods can increase health risks

For example: high fat, high sodium foods can lead to health problems, like heart disease and diabetes, that harm the brain
Smoking

• Smoking is harmful to your body and brain
• It raises the risk of heart attack, stroke, cancer, and lung disease
• Quitting smoking at any age can improve your health
Alcohol

• Affects the brain by slowing or impairing communication among brain cells
• Leads to slurred speech, fuzzy memory, drowsiness and dizziness
• Long term effects include changes in balance, memory, emotions, coordination and body temperature
• Abstaining from alcohol can reverse some of these changes
• As people age, they become more sensitive to alcohol’s affects
• Medications can be dangerous with alcohol
Sleep Problems

• At any age, getting a good night’s sleep supports brain health

• Sleep problems – not getting enough sleep or sleeping poorly – can lead to trouble with memory disorders, concentration, and other cognitive functions
Social Isolation and Loneliness

• Social isolation and feeling lonely may be bad for brain health
• Loneliness has been linked to higher risk of dementia and less activity to poorer cognitive function
Check Your Cognitive Health

• Take a memory screening test

• Simple, quick and safe “healthy brain checkup” that tests memory and other thinking skills

• Consists of a series of questions, tasks or a combination of both

• Open to everyone

• Not a diagnosis but can indicate if you may benefit from a more comprehensive medical evaluation

• Completely confidential
Where to Get a Memory Screening?

• **Over the Internet**
  
  AFA online memory screening test: [afamemorytest.com](http://afamemorytest.com)

• **In Person***
  
  Screening sites through AFA’s National Memory Screening Program
  
  Physician offices: Part of the annual Medicare Wellness Visit

*Many in-person locations are currently closed due to the coronavirus pandemic.
For More Information

Visit Alzheimer’s Foundation of America
alzfdn.org
Get your free Memory Screening Test
afamemorytest.com

AFA Helpline: 866-232-8484
(9 am-9 pm, ET, weekdays; 9 am-3 pm, ET, weekends)