

[IMAGE]

Don't Forget About Preventing Alzheimer's

By Editorial Staff

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive, fatal brain disease that affects an estimated 5 million Americans, and with an aging baby-boomer population, those disturbing statistics are certain to climb in the next several decades. Warning signs include memory loss, difficulty performing familiar tasks, disorientation, poor or decreased judgement and language problems (trouble finding the right words). Eventually, essential activities of daily living are compromised as nerve cells die and the brain gradually loses its capacity to function. Nothing can completely protect you from developing Alzheimer's disease, but evidence suggests lifestyle factors can reduce your risk.

Physical activity increases blood flow to the brain and encourages the growth of new brain cells. Exercise also helps reduce your risk of developing health conditions that can impact overall circulation and brain function, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and stroke.

When exercising, it's important to protect against potential head trauma, because there is evidence that severe head injuries may set the stage for Alzheimer's disease. To maximize your safety, always wear a helmet when participating in activities that could lead to a fall on a hard surface, such as rollerblading, skateboarding, cycling or horseback riding. And when doing housework or other activities that require you to climb, always make sure you're well-supported and can protect yourself in the event of a fall.

Father and son running at the beach. - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Good nutrition plays an important role in reducing Alzheimer's risk. Evidence suggests that consuming a diet rich in antioxidants, particularly vitamin C (present in citrus fruits, tomatoes, onions, red peppers, among other foods) and vitamin E (found in foods such as whole grains, nuts, seeds and vegetable and oils), can reduce your odds of developing the disease. Maintaining safe blood cholesterol levels is another important consideration, since high cholesterol and its consequences (heart disease, stroke) can damage the brain, and high-fat diets may impact learning and memory. Omega-3 fatty acids, found primarily in fish, are excellent in this regard: Research indicates eating just one serving of fish per week can cut your risk of developing Alzheimer's by more than half.

Ensuring healthy brain function is your best bet when trying to prevent Alzheimer's disease, and diet and exercise are two of several strategies that can pay off. To learn more about Alzheimer's and how to reduce your risk, visit www.alzfdn.org.

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