

[IMAGE]

## **Keep Your Brain Young Into Your Golden Years**

By Editorial Staff

The aging process is different for everyone; however, the changes are often similar – aches and pains become more prevalent, range of motion isn't quite what it used to be, and maybe you have noticed changes with your memory as well. According to the [National Institute on Aging](#), as many as 5 million Americans ages 65 and older may have Alzheimer's disease, which unfortunately does not currently have a cure.

Alzheimer's disease is an irreversible, progressive brain disease that slowly destroys memory and thinking skills. Although you can't stop this train, you can slow it down; research by the [Alzheimer's Association](#) suggests combining good nutrition with mental, social and physical activities may help in maintaining brain health. In fact, at the 2014 Alzheimer's Association International Conference, a two-year clinical trial of older adults at risk for cognitive impairment showed that a combination of physical activity, nutritional guidance, cognitive training, social activities and management of heart health risk factors slowed cognitive decline.

If you aren't already conscious of your choices pertaining to diet, mental and social activity, as well as physical activity, you may want to consider some lifestyle changes ... it's never too late to start.

### **What's on Your Weekly Menu?**

[senior - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Studies](#) show that the Mediterranean diet, similar to a diet lower in fat and higher in vegetables and fruits, has been associated with decreased cognitive decline. It is also suggested that you should control your cholesterol and blood pressure, as poor cholesterol and blood pressure health can increase your risk for heart disease and stroke, which are thought to contribute to the development of certain types of dementia (Alzheimer's is a form of dementia). Additionally, poorer cognitive function and an increased risk of vascular dementia has been linked to a lower consumption of milk or dairy products, however, whole-fat dairy products should be avoided. All in all you can't go wrong with lean meats, such as chicken and fish, fresh vegetables and fruits, and a limited intake of sugars and fats.

### **Boost Your Brain With Mental Stimulation**

You have probably seen commercials for Lumosity, an online brain-training site that promotes strategy brain games to maintain a sharp mind. It is these types of games that are suggested to improve cognition. Other ideas include learning a new skill - perhaps a new language or a musical instrument; or taking a class, as one study revealed that a formal education lessens the impact of Alzheimer's disease.

### **Be a Social Butterfly**

According to the National Institute on Aging, research indicates that engaging in social and productive activities, such as taking an art class or volunteering in your community, may lower the risk of developing some health problems, including dementia. Although researchers found a relationship between social activity and better cognitive function, it is not clear whether improved cognition resulted from the social interaction itself or from related factors, such as increased intellectual stimulation, which generally accompanies social interaction.

Research also suggests that people who are sociable and goal-oriented may be happier and less depressed than others. Oftentimes retirees are on a limited budget, but there are lots of free social activities, such as joining a book club or walking group. If you live in retirement community, they usually offer daily events, so choose a few that interest you.

### **Get Movin'**

Physical activity is good for you no matter your age, but according to the Alzheimer's Association, exercise is also associated with a lower risk of cognitive decline. So, if physical activity is something you are able to do, try something cardiovascular to get your heart rate up. This will increase blood flow to your brain and reduce dementia-causing risk factors, such as high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol. *Note:* Always consult with your doctor before starting any new exercise program.

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