

6 Ways to Promote Brain Health and Reduce Your Risk of Dementia



Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep

Follow the [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines](#) and engage in **150 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week**, in bouts of 10 minutes or more. **Add muscle and bone-strengthening activities** using your major muscle groups at least two days per week. Pick activities that you enjoy so you are more likely to stick with it. **Limit sedentary time.**

For adults aged 18–64 get **7–9 hours of good-quality sleep**, or 7–8 hours for those 65 and older.



Weight Management, Diet, and Nutrition

Maintain a healthy weight. Adopt the **Mediterranean Diet** to optimize brain health.



Blood Vessel Health

Actively manage conditions such as **high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes** to promote blood vessel health. **High LDL cholesterol** has also been shown to be an independent risk factor for dementia.



Smoking and Alcohol Use

Quit smoking and if you drink alcohol, it's better to **drink less.**

Canada's new Guidance on Alcohol and Health notes that any amount over **2 drinks per week** is considered a moderate or higher risk to your health. The more you drink, the higher the health risks.

A standard drink is 142 ml (5 oz.) of wine, 341 ml (12 oz.) bottle or can of beer, or 43 ml (1.5 oz.) of liquor.



Brain and Social Activity

Strive to **maintain higher levels of brain activity in mid to late-life.** Being **socially active** is an important predictor of well-being in general and brain health throughout life. For optimum effect, incorporate activities that provide both **cognitive and physical elements** such as yoga or tai chi.



Health Conditions and Drug Side Effects

Hearing loss is a significant risk factor for dementia, and is also associated with increased risk of falls. Protect your ears from excessive noise exposure, get your hearing checked, and use hearing aids if you have hearing loss. **Prevent head injuries** by wearing a seatbelt, wearing a helmet when riding a bike or playing impact sports such as hockey, and reducing your risk of falls. If you have **depression**, get it treated. Reduce your **exposure to air pollution** and second-hand smoke. **Vision loss** can also increase your risk, so have your vision checked and treat conditions such as cataracts. **Manage conditions that lower your oxygen levels**, like heart failure, COPD, and sleep apnea.

Watch for medications that have the potential for adverse effects on memory and cognitive function (e.g. **benzodiazepines, 'Z-drug' sleeping pills, and certain pain medications** such as those that contain opioids).