Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Healthy Heart and Healthy Mind: Reducing the risk of Dementia

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Healthy Heart and Healthy Mind: Reducing the Risk of Dementia

Patient Information

Admiral Nurse Service

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Introduction

This leaflet outlines some of the risk factors for improving a healthy lifestyle including those we can and cannot change, and suggests ways to maintain good health.There is no certain way to prevent all types of illness; however, a healthy lifestyle can help lower your risk of developing acute and chronic illness both at a young age and as you progress to into older age. It can also prevent cardiovascular diseases, such as strokes and heart attacks.

What are risk factors?

A risk factor is something that increases your likelihood of developing a condition. Some risk factors, like age and genetics, can't be changed. There are others, including lifestyle factors such as smoking, which you could try to do something about.

We can't change our age or our genes and there is currently no way we can completely prevent some illness developing However, there may be some simple things we can all do that might help lower our risk. Risk factors for cardiovascular disease (like heart disease and stroke) are also risk factors for dementia.

Leading a healthy lifestyle and taking regular exercise will help lower your risk of cardiovascular diseases, and it's likely you could be lowering your risk of dementia too, particularly vascular dementia. Weight management by eating a healthy diet can prevent the onset of diabetes. Studies suggest it may be particularly important to maintain a healthy lifestyle in your forties and fifties to help lower the risk of such conditions like dementia and diabetes.

For good heart health and good brain health and to reduce your risk of developing dementia and other serious health conditions, it's recommended that you:

- stop smoking (if you smoke)

- keep active and exercise regularly
- maintain a healthy weight
- eat a healthy balanced diet
- only drink alcohol within NHS guidelines
- keep cholesterol and blood pressure at a healthy level

Smoking

Smoking can cause your arteries to narrow, which can lead to a rise in your blood pressure. It also increases your risk of developing cardiovascular diseases, cancer and dementia.

The NHS Smoking Helpline offers advice and encouragement to help you stop smoking. You can call them on **0800 022 4332** or visit the NHS Smoke free website https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree

Exercise

Exercising regularly will make your heart and blood circulatory system more efficient. It will also help to lower your cholesterol and keep your blood pressure at a healthy level, decreasing your risk of developing some kinds of dementia, hypertension, (high blood pressure) diabetes and heart disease.

For most people, a minimum of 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate intensity aerobic activity each week, such as cycling or fast walking, is recommended.

Diet

A low-fat, high-fibre diet including plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and wholegrain can help reduce your risk of some kinds of dementia, high blood pressure, heart disease and some forms of cancer.

Limiting the amount of salt in your diet to no more than six grams a day can also help. Too much salt will increase your blood pressure, which puts you at risk of developing some types of dementia and heart disease.

High cholesterol levels may also put you at risk of developing some kinds of dementia, and heart disease, so try to limit the amount of food you eat that is high in saturated fat.

Alcohol

The best advice at the moment, is to only drink alcohol within NHS lower-risk guidelines. This means not regularly drinking more than 14 units a week for both men and women.

Anyone who drinks more than 14 units a week should spread their drinking over three or more days. A good way to reduce alcohol intake is to have several alcohol-free days a week.

Further help and advice can be obtained from:

In hospital

Admiral Nurse Service (Clinical Nurse Specialist for Dementia)

Telephone **01942 778612**



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