



Alzheimer's Services

of Marshall County

P. O. Box 2842, Albertville, AL 35950

Maintain Your Brain

Your genes determine many aspects of how you grow old and your risk for developing dementia but life choices and healthy behaviors play a big role in determining how well you age and how many diseases occur that damage your brain. You can't change your genes, but you can control your lifestyle. Here are a few tips:

Visit your doctor on a regular basis and follow their advice to:

- Control levels of cholesterol and triglycerides.
- Control blood pressure.
- Identify and treat depression. Untreated depression may produce memory problems that resemble dementia which may improve with medications.

Eat nutritious meals. A diet rich in fruits and veggies, whole grains and fish will help keep oxygen flowing to the brain. Limit fats, caffeine, sugar and salt. Maintain a healthy weight.

Exercise at least three times a week. Find a walking partner, study a topic and discuss it on your walks. You'll get mental stimulation, physical exercise and social connection – the key brain strengtheners.

Get adequate sleep. Your brain is active when you are asleep – it is consolidating memories from your day. Skip the late show and give your brain time to work.

To promote your physical and mental well being, develop and maintain spiritual and religious practices.

Be aware of your stress level. Try meditation, yoga or a walk in the woods to relax and refocus your mind.

Control your alcohol consumption. Alcohol-induced dementia is one of the five most common causes of intellectual loss in the older person. Anyone with memory difficulty should stop drinking alcohol as it worsens confusion in the older person, even those who do not suffer from dementia.

If you smoke, stop.

Continue to learn new things, read and engage in mental activities such as crossword puzzles.

Socialize and make new friends. Volunteer. There are so many opportunities to be productive and help others. Don't be a loner – it can lull your brain into slowdown mode.

Vary your routine. Try a different grocery store. Join a new club. Learn to paint. Start a journal. Make a "Bucket List" – things you have always wanted to do but haven't yet. Trying something different stimulates new neural connections.

Living an active life – resisting the call of the couch and the remote control – is your best bet for staying sharp.