

The Alzheimer’s Association developed these risk reduction messages about cognitive decline for integration into existing campaigns about exercise, smoking, diabetes, and other topics below. Each topic has multiple messages from which health educators can select. The messages are not intended to be used as stand-alone campaign.

The messages are based on the current state of evidence^{1,2,3} that identifies protective and risk factors for cognitive decline and dementia. As such, the messages provide an opportunity for the public health community to disseminate evidence-based messages about risk reduction for preserving cognitive health. This is a recommended action for public health in the Healthy Brain Initiative’s [State and Local Partnerships to Address Dementia: The 2018-2023 Road Map](#) (HBI Road Map).

The HBI Road Map defines **brain health** as: a concept that involves making the most of the brain’s capacity and helping to reduce some risks that occur with aging. Brain health refers to the ability to draw on the strengths of the brain to remember, learn, play, concentrate, and maintain a clear, active mind.



Exercise

- Exercise is not only good for your body, it’s also good for your brain. Get regular exercise that makes your heart beat faster, which increases blood flow to the brain and body.
- Take care of both your heart and brain. Eat a healthy diet, control your weight, and exercise regularly.
- Physical activity is an important part of keeping your brain and your body healthy. Choose exercise you enjoy so you’ll be more likely to do it again and again.
- Pick an exercise that makes you think or talk with other people, such as a dance class or walking with a friend. By using your brain and your body, you can get the most out of the time you spend exercising.
- Physical activity can help reduce your risk of cognitive decline by lowering risk factors such as high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol.
- It’s never too late to start exercising for better health for your brain and body.

Smoking

- Smoking may increase your risk for dementia. Stop now to reduce your risk.
- Quit smoking for a healthier brain *and* body.
- If you smoke, quitting now may reduce your risk for dementia.
- It’s never too late to quit smoking. Quitting at any age seems to benefit the health of your brain and body.

Diabetes

- Diabetes may increase your risk for dementia.
- Visit your doctor regularly. Work with him or her to actively manage your diabetes and help your brain stay healthy.
- Risk factors for heart disease — including diabetes — can negatively affect your brain.
- Managing your diabetes with a healthy diet and regular exercise may benefit your brain.

Midlife Hypertension – high blood pressure

- Heart disease and high blood pressure can damage your brain's health.
- Get your blood pressure checked regularly. Work with your health care professional to control your blood pressure and reduce your risk of cognitive decline.
- Keep your blood pressure under control for a healthier body *and* brain.
- High blood pressure increases your risk for heart disease and possibly dementia.
- Dementia and stroke are more likely to affect people with high blood pressure. Don't take unnecessary risks. Keep your blood pressure under control.

Obesity

- Maintain a healthy weight. It's not only good for your heart, it's good for your brain.
- Obesity in middle age may increase your risk of dementia.
- Evidence shows that risk factors for heart disease — including obesity — can also have a negative impact on your brain's health.
- Take care of both your heart and brain. Eat a healthy diet, control your weight, and exercise regularly.
- Eat a healthy diet with less fat and more vegetables and fruit to help control your weight and help your brain stay healthy.

Head Injury

- Major injuries to your head can raise your risk of dementia.
- **For younger audiences:** Wear a seat belt and use a helmet when playing contact sports or riding a bike. Protect your brain today.
- **For older audiences:** Wear a seat belt, use a helmet when riding a bike, and make your home safer in places where you could trip, slip, or fall. Head injuries increase your risk of dementia.

References

¹Livingston G, Sommerlad A, Orgeta V, Costafreda SG, Huntley J, et al. Dementia prevention, intervention and care. *The Lancet*; 2017;390(10113):2673-734.

²The SPRINT MIND Investigators for the SPRINT Research Group. Effect of Intensive vs Standard Blood Pressure Control on Probable Dementia: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *JAMA*; 2019;321(6):553-561.

³Baumgart, M., Snyder, H. M., Carrillo, M. C., Fazio, S., Kim, H., & Johns, H. (2015). Summary of the evidence on modifiable risk factors for cognitive decline and dementia: a population-based perspective. *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, 11(6), 718-726.

⁴National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. Preventing Cognitive Decline and Dementia: A Way Forward. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press; 2017.