

Alzheimer's & dementia prevention #5: Stress management

Stress that is chronic or severe takes a heavy toll on the brain, leading to shrinkage in a key memory area of the brain known as the hippocampus, hampering nerve cell growth, and increasing your risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Yet simple daily tools can minimize its harmful effects.

Get your stress levels in check with these proven techniques

- **Breathe!** Stress alters your breathing rate and impacts oxygen levels in the brain. Quiet your stress response with deep, abdominal breathing. Restorative breathing is powerful, simple, and free!
- **Schedule daily relaxation activities.** Keeping stress under control requires regular effort. Make relaxation a priority, whether it's a walk in the park, playtime with your dog, yoga, or a soothing bath.
- **Nourish inner peace.** Most scientists acknowledge a strong mind-body connection, and various studies associate spirituality with better brain health. Regular meditation, prayer, reflection, and religious practice may immunize you against the damaging effects of stress.

Alzheimer's & dementia prevention #6: An active social life

Human beings are highly social creatures. We don't thrive in isolation, and neither do our brains. Studies show that the more connected we are, the better we fare on tests of memory and cognition. Staying socially active may even protect against Alzheimer's disease and dementia, so make your social life a priority.

Oftentimes, we become more isolated as we get older, but there are many ways to keep your support system strong and **develop new relationships:**

- Volunteer
- Join a club or social group
- Visit your local community center or senior center
- Take group classes (such as at the gym or a community college)
- Reach out over the phone or email
- Connect to others via social networks such as Facebook
- Get to know your neighbors
- Make a weekly date with friends
- Get out (go to the movies, the park, museums, and other public places)