



**MAKING**  
**EVERY**  
**CONTACT**  
**COUNT**

# Dementia prevention

## Key messages

- Dementia is a term used to describe a collection of symptoms including memory loss, problems with reasoning, perception, and communication skills.
- It can lead to a reduction in a person's ability to carry out routine activities such as washing, dressing, and cooking.
- Dementia is caused by different brain diseases, the most common being Alzheimer's disease (caused by an abnormal build-up of proteins in and around brain cells) followed by vascular dementia (caused by problems with the blood supply to the brain).
- There's good evidence that a healthy lifestyle can help reduce your risk of developing dementia when you're older.
- "What's good for the heart is good for the brain".

## Did you know?

- In the U.K it is estimated that around 850,000 people have dementia, by 2025 over 1 million people could have dementia in the UK and by 2050 this figure will exceed 2 million.
- There are more than 40,000 people in the UK under the age of 65 years, affected by dementia.
- 38% of over-65's in England estimated to be living with dementia never get a diagnosis.
- Dementia is estimated to cost society £26.3 billion a year in the UK and this cost is set to rise as the population ages.
- An estimated 540,000 people in England act as primary carers for people with dementia, half of these are employed with 112,540 leaving employment to meet their caring roles and 66,000 carers reducing their working hours.



## What can you do?

- **Be more physically active** i.e. walking, dance/fitness class, doing housework, taking the stairs, and gardening could improve some aspects of memory. Adaption and adjustments to activities may be necessary.
- **Eat healthily** to nourish the brain and protect damage to the brain cells (See MECC sheet on nutrition and hydration).
- **Drink less alcohol** to limit the risk of brain cells dying and the brain tissue from shrinking.
- **Stop smoking** smoking is one of the biggest lifestyle risk factors for dementia.
- **Be socially active** more social time with family/friends whilst maintaining skills and independence. Being socially isolated can greatly increase a person's risk of dementia (See MECC sheet on Loneliness).
- **Control diabetes** to prevent or delay long-term, serious health problems, such as heart disease, vision loss and kidney disease. If you develop dementia you may forget to eat or eat too much and physical activity can become more challenging and this will impact on managing your diabetes.
- **Control high blood pressure** high blood pressure can lead to a stroke where the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off or the blood vessel bursts. This can cause a bleed on the brain which can result in brain cell death which can lead to vascular dementia.
- **Challenge your brain** this can prevent or slow the onset of cognitive decline that could lead to dementia. Try using word games, crossword, knitting, jigsaw puzzle, learn a new language, play an instrument.
- **Hearing loss** people may start to lose their hearing as they get older but not notice at first. To reduce the risk of dementia it's important to get your hearing tested. The use of hearing aids has been shown to reduce the risk of dementia to the level of a person with normal hearing.
- **Advance care plans** offer this opportunity for people with dementia while they have the capacity for these discussions, so that people living with dementia can die with dignity in their place of choosing.
- **Supporting well** involve the person with dementia and their carers in all care and treatment planning, making it personal, making small adaptations such as using signage and lighting to support a dementia-friendly environment.

## Helpful contacts

**Dudley Adults Portal** An online tool that offers a quick, easy and secure way for residents, carers and professionals to access information in the community and services available from adult social care. [www.dudley.gov.uk/dudley-adults-portal/](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/dudley-adults-portal/)

**Dementia research** An opportunity for people living with dementia and their carers to find out about opportunities to take part in research [www.joindementiaresearch.nihr.ac.uk/](http://www.joindementiaresearch.nihr.ac.uk/)

**Alzheimer's Society** A useful resource offering a range of support services from a listening ear on the phone, to a visit in person and opportunities to connect with others, plus a range of publications and factsheets.

[www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support)

**Healthy Dudley** Information and resources for all ages on healthier lifestyles and looking after your health and wellbeing. [www.healthydudley.co.uk](http://www.healthydudley.co.uk)



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