

# WAM

## 10 THINGS

### EVERY WOMAN CAN DO TO TAKE CARE OF HER BRAIN

Every 65 seconds a new brain develops Alzheimer's disease. Two out of three Alzheimer's brains belong to women and we don't know why, and the risk is even higher for women of color.

Women's brains are different from men's, and have unique needs. In fact, **up to 1/3 of Alzheimer's cases may be preventable through lifestyle changes.** Here are 10 simple things that every woman can do to reduce the risks of dementia and Alzheimer's.

#### 1. Change your diet.

What we eat affects our brains, hormone levels and menopause symptoms. A diet rich in fatty fish, fruits, vegetables and nuts can help reduce inflammation, improve brain health and potentially help prevent dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

#### 2. Take a walk.

Women are less likely to exercise regularly than men. But moderate daily exercise can delay or reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease, and also creates physical changes to our brains that can help protect against dementia.

#### 3. Get enough sleep.

Women have more trouble sleeping than men, but sleep is vital because that is when our brains remove toxins and proteins that could lead to Alzheimer's. Our brain needs at least 7-8 hours to go through its cleansing cycles.

#### 4. Take care of your heart.

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in women, and is a risk factor for cognitive decline. A healthy diet, managing stress levels and keeping a healthy weight can protect both our hearts and our brains.

#### 5. Exercise your mind.

Keeping our brains active may help reduce our risk of dementia. The key is to challenge your brain: read a new book, learn to play an instrument or a new game - anything that stimulates your brain can help build up an ability to ward off cognitive decline.

#### 6. Increase your antioxidants.

Vitamins A, C, and E may help reduce oxidative stress in women's brains, which are vulnerable to inflammation and stress. These powerful vitamins can also help alleviate symptoms of menopause.

#### 7. Keep stress in check.

Stress raises cortisol levels, which can lead to brain shrinkage and memory impairment, especially after menopause. So: meditate, sleep, exercise, and engage in social interaction -- women are more likely than men to be impacted by loneliness and lack of support.

#### 8. Take care of your gut.

The brain and gastrointestinal system are connected. You can nurture healthy gut microbes by keeping insulin levels in check and by eating less sugar, fewer processed foods, and more fiber and fermented foods.

#### 9. Ask about hormones.

Menopause occurs over several years, and can lead to hormonal imbalances in women, with perimenopause often beginning in mid- to late 40's. These imbalances can lead to brain fog, memory lapses, and other troubling effects. Talk to a doctor about hormone therapies.

#### 10. Watch for depression.

Women are twice as likely as men to have anxiety and depression, and many develop depression during menopause. This could impact memory and result in an increased risk for Alzheimer's. If you are depressed, talk to a doctor right away, as there are many treatment options available.

For more resources and information about women's brain health, visit Women's Alzheimer's Movement at [womensalzheimersmovement.org](http://womensalzheimersmovement.org).

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