

DEMENTIA RISK FACTORS

Reducing Dementia Risk Factors

Dementia is the second leading cause of death in Australia and is not normal aging. However, 80% of people with Dementia are over the age of 75 years. There are many different conditions that cause Dementia including the more common causes such as Alzheimer's Disease, Vascular Dementia and Lewy Body Dementia.

There is no cure for Dementia, but evidence suggests that lifestyle changes may assist to delay the onset and progression of Dementia. Recommendations include ensuring that Diabetes and Cardiovascular Risk factors are addressed. Assessment and management of interrelated risk factors such as hypertension, obesity, physical inactivity, smoking, and blood sugar levels are encouraged. Addressing these issues in mid life (45-65 years) is highly recommended with ongoing monitoring as we age.

Hypertension: which is linked to cognitive decline may be controlled by diet, exercise, limiting alcohol, stress reduction, medical review and adhering to recommended medication regimes to avoid complications such as Coronary Heart Disease, Stroke, or Kidney Disease.

Obesity: in 2014-2015, 2 in 3 Australian adults were obese or overweight. Mid-life obesity is strongly associated with an increased risk of Dementia. A Mediterranean Diet is recommended to maintain healthy brains. This diet includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, potatoes, nuts, olive oil, and fish. Foods high in sugar and trans-fats are avoided e.g., fried, and fast foods, snack foods. Regular intake of red meat and poultry should be reduced.

Diabetes: is a risk factor for Strokes and Dementia and Diabetes is increasing in prevalence. Stroke is the 2nd leading cause of death for a person with Diabetes. Reducing modifiable Cardiovascular risk factors such as Hypertension will reduce the risk of Stroke and also Dementia. The risk of repeated Hypoglycaemia (low blood glucose) increases in the elderly and can contribute to cognitive decline. Regular eating habits, healthy lifestyles, medication reviews to reduce polypharmacy and to manage chronic illnesses including Renal and Hepatic (liver) Impairment will reduce the risk of Hypoglycaemia.

Help and assistance is available. For further information please contact Alzheimer's Queensland on the Advice Line: 1800 639 331.