

# Supporting Brain Health In Our Community

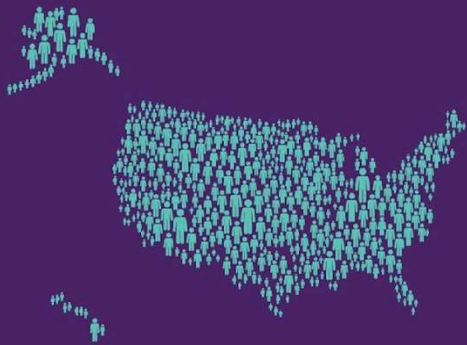
**Grace Gill, Director of Public Policy**  
**Michelle Kutner, State Program Director**  
**Alzheimer's Association South Dakota**  
**April 22, 2026**

# Objectives

- Identify how certain behaviors affect our brains and bodies
- Name modifiable risk factors for cognitive decline
- List ways to incorporate brain healthy habits

# 2025 ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE FACTS AND FIGURES

Over  
**7 MILLION**  
Americans are living with  
Alzheimer's



**1 IN 3**

older adults dies  
with Alzheimer's or  
another dementia



IT KILLS MORE THAN

breast cancer



prostate cancer

COMBINED

In 2025, Alzheimer's  
and other dementias  
will cost the nation

**\$384  
BILLION**



By 2050,  
these costs  
could rise to nearly

**\$1  
TRILLION**

The lifetime  
risk for Alzheimer's  
at age 45 is

**1  
IN**

**5**

for  
women

**1  
IN**

**10**

for  
men

Between  
2000 and  
2022 deaths  
from heart  
disease have  
decreased

**2.1%**



while deaths  
from  
Alzheimer's  
disease have  
increased

**142%**



NEARLY  
**12  
MILLION**

Americans provide  
unpaid care for people  
with Alzheimer's or  
other dementias

These caregivers  
provided more than  
19 billion hours  
valued at nearly

**\$413  
BILLION**



UP TO  
**4 IN 5**

Americans feel  
optimistic about new  
Alzheimer's treatments  
in the next decade



**92%**  
of Americans would  
want a medication to  
slow the progression of  
Alzheimer's following  
a diagnosis

## About the Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association leads the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support.

Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's and all other dementia<sup>®</sup>.

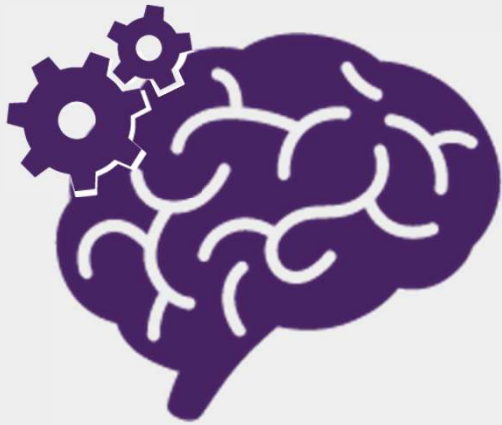


## Did You Know?

Changes in the brain due to Alzheimer's are thought to occur many years before a person begins to experience cognitive symptoms.

## Cognitive Decline

Cognitive decline refers to changes in memory, thinking, and/or reasoning that are worsening over time.



## Dementia

An umbrella term for loss of memory and other thinking abilities **severe enough to interfere with daily life**. Dementia is NOT a normal part of aging.

Alzheimer's

Vascular

Lewy body

Frontotemporal

Other, including Huntington's

Mixed dementia: from more than one cause

## Early Detection and Treatment



Early detection is important, **pay attention to any changes in memory, thinking or behavior** that you notice in yourself or someone else.



There are treatments that can change disease progression, and drug and non-drug options that may help treat symptoms. **Talk to your doctor to learn more about treatment options.**



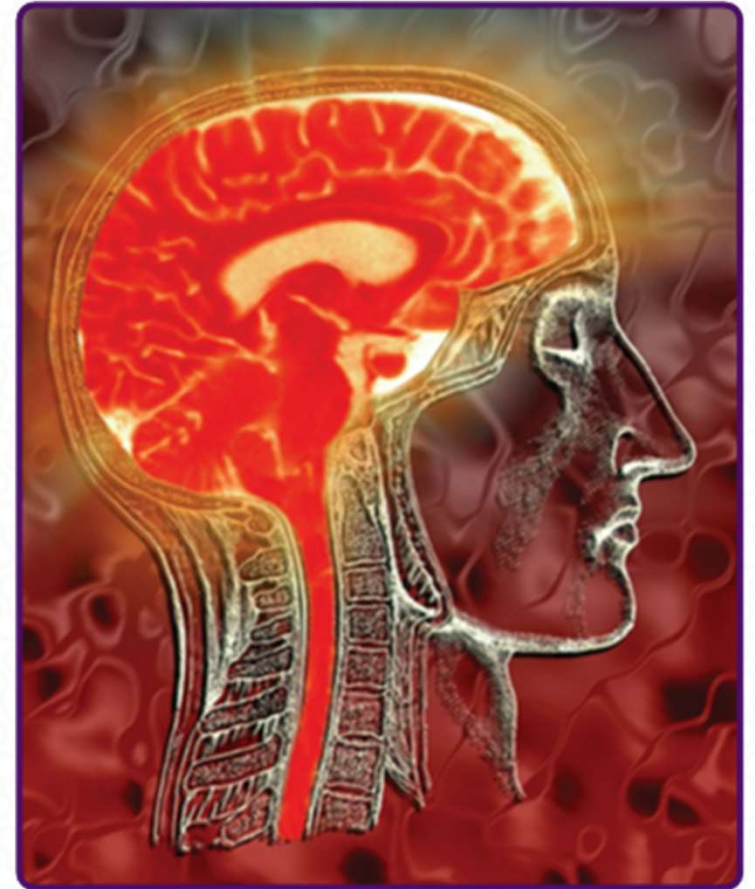
We all deserve a life with the healthiest brain possible.

We can all take actions to help protect our brain health.



## The Brain

- The brain is the control center of the body.
- Over 100 billion nerve cells, or neurons, create a branching network.
- Signals traveling through the brain form memories, thoughts and feelings.
- Alzheimer's disease destroys brain cells.





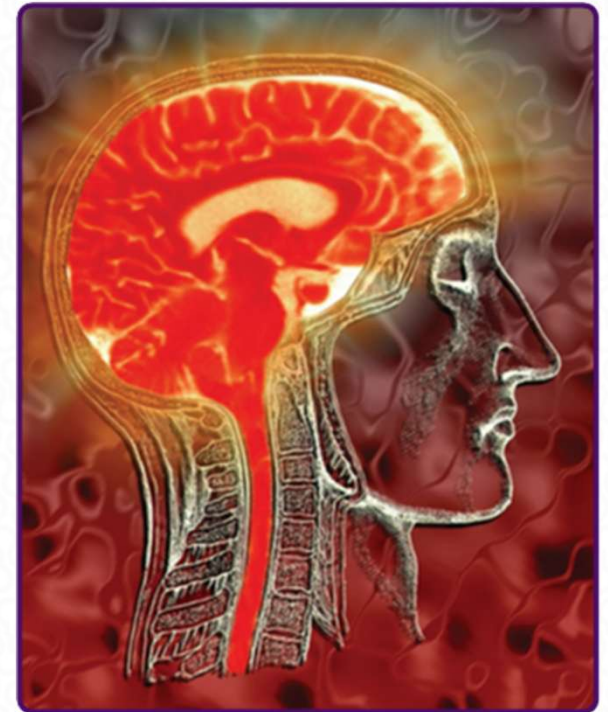
## The Heart-Brain Connection

### **The heart and brain are interrelated**

What you do to protect your heart can also help your brain continue to operate at its best.

### **The brain needs blood flow**

The brain depends on oxygen and adequate blood flow to work well. It receives 20-25% of the blood from every heartbeat.



# Did You Know?

Up to \_\_\_\_ of dementia cases could be prevented or delayed by targeting modifiable risk factors.

- 15%
- 30%
- 40%
- 50%



# Risks to Brain Health

In most cases, Alzheimer's is the result of complex interactions across multiple factors.

## **Non-modifiable**

Ones we cannot change

- » Age
- » Genetics
- » Family history

## **Modifiable**

Ones we can change!

- » Certain health conditions
- » Health behaviors

# Risk Reduction and Promoting Brain Health

- Positive, everyday actions can make a difference in brain health, even lowering the risk of cognitive decline and possibly Alzheimer's and dementia.
- Up to 40% of dementia cases could be prevented or delayed by targeting modifiable risk factors.

## 10 HEALTHY HABITS FOR YOUR BRAIN

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR BRAIN HEALTH. THESE HEALTHY HABITS CAN LOWER THE RISK OF DEVELOPING COGNITIVE DECLINE AND POSSIBLY DEMENTIA. THIS IS TRUE EVEN FOR PEOPLE WITH A HISTORY OF DEMENTIA IN THEIR FAMILIES.

Follow as many of these tips as possible to achieve the most benefits for your brain and body. It's never too late or too early. Start now!

### Challenge your mind



Be curious. Put your brain to work and do something that is new or hard for you. Learn a new skill. Try something artistic. Challenging your mind may have short- and long-term benefits for your brain.



### Stay in school

Education reduces your risk of cognitive decline and dementia. Encourage youth to stay in school and pursue the highest level of training possible. Continue your own education by taking a class at a local library, college or online.



### Protect your head

Help prevent an injury to your head. Wear a helmet for activities like biking, and wear a seatbelt. Protect yourself while playing sports. Do what you can to prevent falls, especially for older adults.



### Control your blood pressure

Medications can help lower high blood pressure. And healthy habits like eating right and physical activity can help too. Work with a health care provider to control your blood pressure.



### Eat right

Eating healthier foods can help reduce your risk of cognitive decline. This includes more vegetables and leaner meats/proteins, along with foods that are less processed and lower in fat. Choose healthier meals and snacks that you enjoy and are available to you.

### Be smoke-free



Quitting smoking can lower the risk of cognitive decline back to levels similar to those who have not smoked. It's never too late to stop.

### Manage diabetes



Type 2 diabetes can be prevented or controlled by healthier eating, increasing physical activity and medication, if necessary.



### Get moving

Engage in regular exercise. This includes activities that raise your heart rate and increase blood flow to the brain and body. Find ways to build more movement into your day — walking, dancing, gardening — whatever works for you!



### Sleep well

Good quality sleep is important for brain health. Stay off screens before bed and make your sleep space as comfortable as possible. Do all you can to minimize disruptions. If you have any sleep-related problems, such as sleep apnea, talk to a health care provider.



### Maintain a healthy weight

Talk to your health care provider about the weight that is healthy for you. Other healthy habits on this list — eating right, physical activity and sleep — can help with maintaining a healthy weight.

Learn more at [alz.org/healthyhabits](http://alz.org/healthyhabits).



# 10 HEALTHY HABITS FOR YOUR BRAIN



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Stay in school



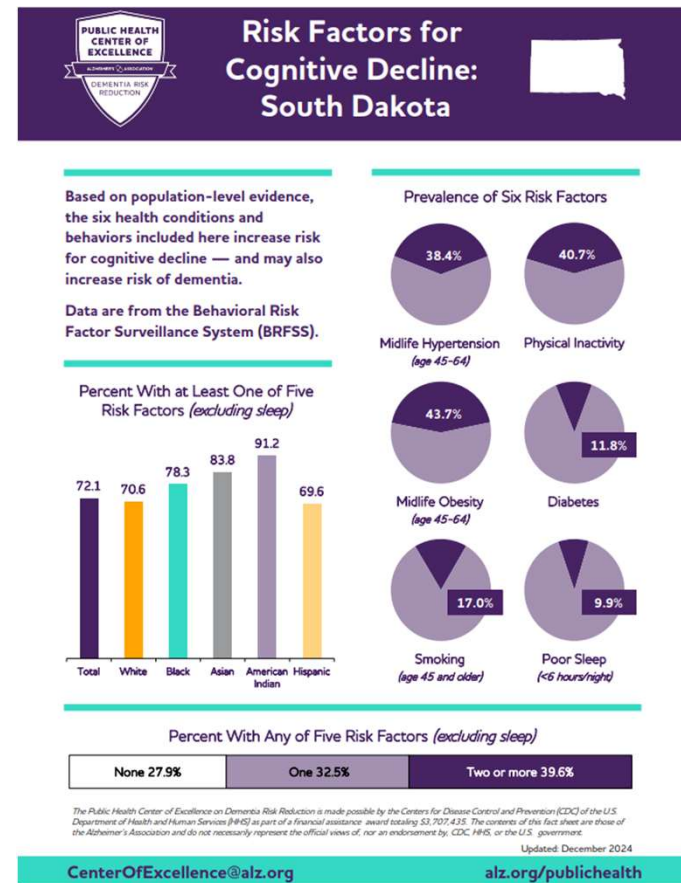
Eat right



Maintain a healthy weight

# SD State Risk Factors for Cognitive Decline

- Midlife Obesity
- Physical Inactivity
- Midlife Hypertension
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Poor Sleep





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## Sleep Well

Quality sleep is important for brain health. Stay consistent with your bedtime and make your sleep space as comfortable as possible. Do all you can to minimize distractions. If you have any sleep-related problems, such as sleep apnea, talk to a health care provider.



## Be Smoke-Free

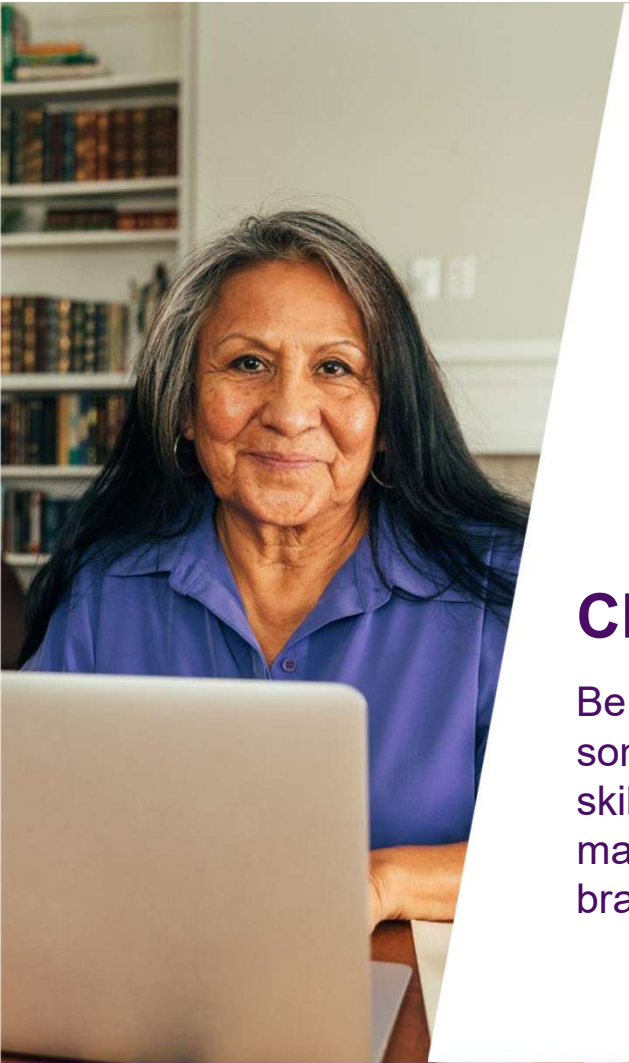
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Why these

# 10 HEALTHY HABITS FOR YOUR BRAIN

?

Currently, these risk factors have the strongest levels of evidence.

There may be other risks to brain health but the current body of science is lower or unclear. Exciting research is exploring many topics, including hearing and vision loss, stress, air pollution.

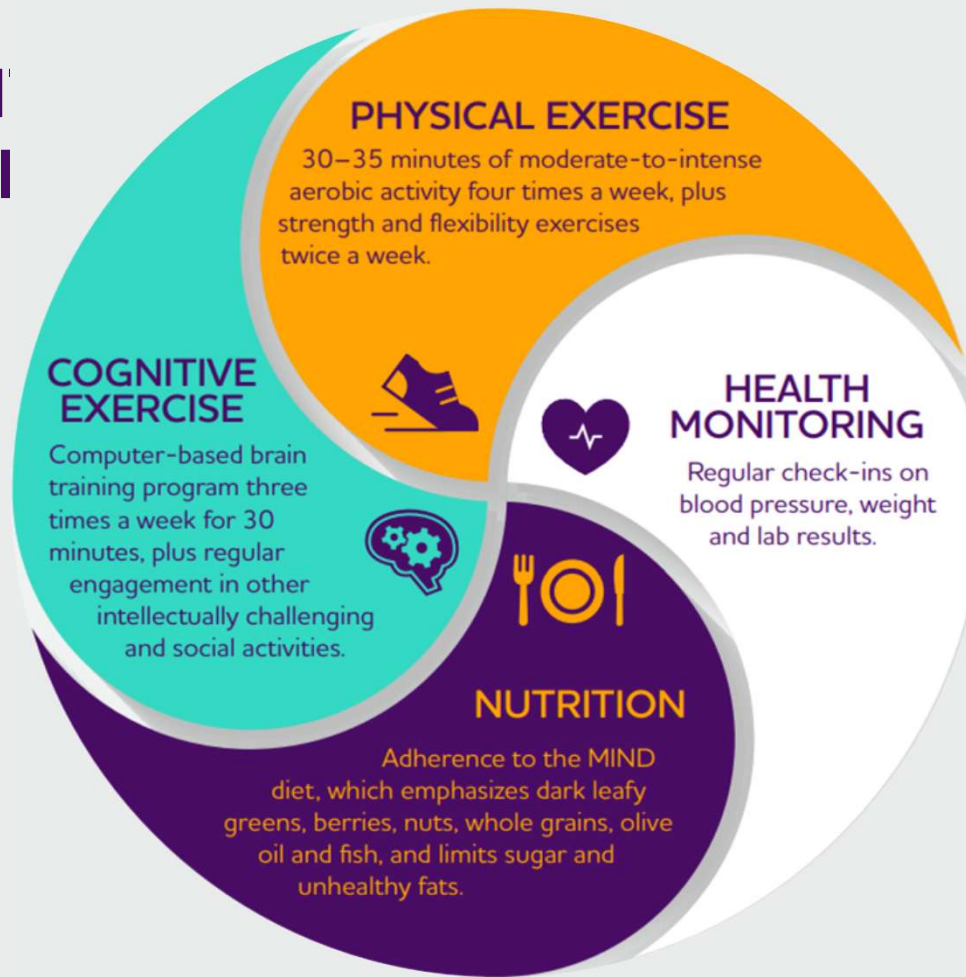
Learn more [alz.org/healthyhabits](https://alz.org/healthyhabits)



**U.S. POINTER**  
ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

The first large-scale, randomized controlled trial in the U.S. to evaluate whether addressing several lifestyle factors at the same time – diet, exercise, cognitive stimulation, and heart health – can protect cognitive function in older adults at increased risk for cognitive decline.

# THE U.S. POINT BRAIN HEALTH RECIPE\*



Participants followed either a self-guided structured lifestyle program. The two interventions both focused on the same lifestyle domains, but differed in structure, accountability and support provided.



# Take Charge of Your Brain Health



There are several risk factors for cognitive decline and dementia. Some, such as age, we can't control. But there are **actions we can take to improve our brain health.**



Growing evidence shows that **healthy living can lower the risk of cognitive decline and possibly dementia.**



Our brains need to be taken care of at all ages. It is never **too early or too late** to take action to protect brain health.

# People of all ages can benefit from adding in more healthy behaviors.

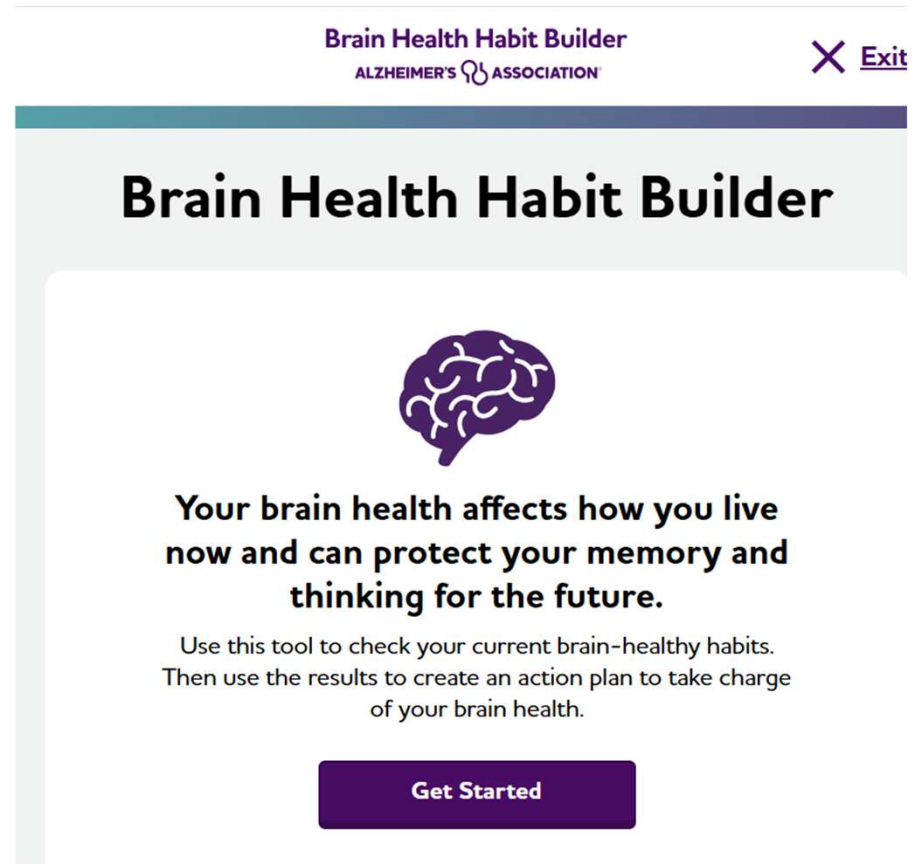
## Things to Keep in Mind when incorporating healthy habits:

- Think about the support you will need to make changes or overcome obstacles
- Build on things you like or are already doing
- Start with small changes

# Brain Health Habit Builder

## Free online tool

- Helps you learn the basics of brain health
- Check your current habits
- Get research-backed guidance



The screenshot shows the top of the 'Brain Health Habit Builder' tool. At the top right, it says 'Brain Health Habit Builder' and 'ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION' with a logo. There is an 'Exit' button with a close icon. Below this is a header with the title 'Brain Health Habit Builder'. In the center is a brain icon. Below the icon is the text: 'Your brain health affects how you live now and can protect your memory and thinking for the future.' Underneath that is a paragraph: 'Use this tool to check your current brain-healthy habits. Then use the results to create an action plan to take charge of your brain health.' At the bottom is a dark blue button with the text 'Get Started'.



## 24/7 Helpline

The Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900) is a free service offering confidential information and support for people living with dementia, caregivers, families and the public.



## Free Education and Support

The Association offers robust information, education and support both in person and online, and helps to connect individuals with resources in the community.

## TrialMatch®

The Association connects individuals living with cognitive impairment, Alzheimer's disease or another dementia, caregivers and healthy participants with current research studies. This free, easy-to-use service helps you find clinical research that may be a good fit.





## Join us to take action for brain health

- ✓ Spread the word! Tell others about these brain-healthy habits.
- ✓ Get involved in clinical trials or a research study. Some studies focus on prevention.
- ✓ Fight Alzheimer's through a fundraising activity of your choice on a day that works for you.
- ✓ Visit [alz.org](https://www.alz.org) or call our helpline to learn more.

# Alzheimer's Association Resources

2025 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures Report-[alz.org/getmedia/76e51bb6-c003-4d84-8019-e0779d8c4e8d/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf](https://www.alz.org/getmedia/76e51bb6-c003-4d84-8019-e0779d8c4e8d/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf)

Alzheimer's and Public Health Action in South Dakota-[www.alz.org/professionals/public-health/state-overview/south-dakota](https://www.alz.org/professionals/public-health/state-overview/south-dakota)

BOLD Center of Excellence on Dementia Risk Reduction: Modifiable Risk Reduction Videos available at [bit.ly/3U795JK](https://bit.ly/3U795JK) (Mild Traumatic Brain Injury, Diet and Nutrition, Cognitive Activity, Physical Activity, Diabetes and Obesity, Vascular Risks, Tobacco Use)

10 Healthy Habits for Your Brain-[alz.org/healthyhabits](https://www.alz.org/healthyhabits)

Brain Health Habit Builder-[www.alz.org/help-support/brain\\_health/brain-health-habit-builder](https://www.alz.org/help-support/brain_health/brain-health-habit-builder)