

# Healthy Brain Habits - Strategies to Prevent and Delay Alzheimer's - start today to create your own personal anti-Alzheimer's action plan!

## 1. Exercise - Get Moving!

- exercise at a moderate aerobic pace at least 30 minutes 5 days/week (can decrease risk by 35%)
- weight and resistance training/strength work builds muscle mass, bones, and brain health - adding 2-3 sessions/week along with the aerobic exercise cuts your risk of Alzheimer's in half-stretch daily to improve balance, avoid muscle/ligament injury, and reduce risk of falls/head injuries
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- move as much as possible and in different ways to boost your brain health - look for opportunities to walk, bend, stretch, and lift (like gardening, taking the stairs, cleaning house, playing with children)

## 2. Eat a Brain-healthy Diet

- follow a Mediterranean diet (lots of omega 3 fatty acids/fish, fresh produce, whole grains, nuts, olive oil, and some red wine & dark chocolate, and avoid full fat dairy products and red meat - see my blog on this diet this year)
- maintain consistent blood sugar and insulin levels (eat several small meals/day, avoid packaged refined processed foods especially high in sugars)
- eat a rainbow each day (veggies and fruits across the color spectrum maximize antioxidants and vitamins, especially berries and green leafy veggies)
- drink tea daily and even moderate coffee (green, white, and oolong teas are especially brain healthy)
- Daily Supplements - Vitamin D (see my article about the vital importance of Vitamin D), quality fish oil (tested for heavy metals), folic acid, B12, possibly natural vitamin E, ibuprofen & aspirin (and even the blood pressure medicines in the ACE and ARB category, like lisinopril and cozaar)

## 3. Build Your Brain!

- set aside time each day to learn something new, and the greater the challenge then the larger deposit in your brain reserves (play a musical instrument, study a foreign language, read)
- practice memorization (like Bible verses, poems, U.S. capitols or parks), and create rhymes and patterns to strengthen your memory connections
- solve riddles and work puzzles - these brain teasers and strategy games give great mental exercise and build your capacity to form and retain mental associations (especially look for activities that use both sides of your brain...logic and language vs artistic and creative)

- practice the 5 W's - Who, What, Where, When, and Why - observe and list your daily experiences like a crime detective (capturing visual details keeps your brain cells firing)
- follow the road less traveled! - vary your habits frequently to create new brain pathways (take a new route, eat with your other hand, rearrange your computer desktop, eat in a different spot or table, go camping, shop at a farmer's market rather than the supermarket, use your senses differently like taking a shower with your eyes closed or eating a family meal in silence using just visual clues or going into your home with your eyes closed)

#### **4.Sleep to Restore Your Memory** (see my "Sleep Well" article)

- your brain needs regular restful sleep to process store and recall information (and sleep deprivation can damage your brain and central nervous system)
- establish a regular sleep schedule, set the mood (brisk evening exercise, cool temperatures, hot bath, dim light, and white noise can help), stop snoring, and quiet inner chatter (if this is keeping you awake then get up and read a book in another room for 20 minutes then get back in bed)

#### **5.Learn to Relax and Manage Stress** (lifelong stress can double or quadruple your risk)

- turn off a stress response by deep abdominal breathing (inhale, hold, and exhale sequences)
- schedule daily relaxation activities (take a walk, pray, sit quietly and observe nature, read, pet your pet, Tai-Chi, yoga, stretching, guided imagery)
- stay connected - developing a strong support system through family, friends, church, exercise groups, clubs, and volunteer activities improves mood and slows mental decline
- nourish inner peace with a strong mind-body connection - regular prayer, reflection, meditation, and religious practice can decrease and immunize you against the damaging effects of stress

#### **6.Protect Your Brain**

- avoid toxins (smoking, heavy drinking, drugs)
- wear a well fitting helmet, your seatbelt, and trip-proofing your environment (head trauma at any point in life significantly increases your risk of Alzheimers)
- create a brain-safe environment (decrease exposure to mold, pesticides, pollution, lead, and other environmental toxins)

**Act now to create and implement your own personal anti-Alzheimer's action plan!... Your Dr. Lisa is!**