

# Think Brain Health



**#LoveYourBrain**

**Your brain is  
who you are**

**It is your  
thoughts and  
feelings and  
memories**

**It is curious and  
creative and it needs  
to be protected**

# What is Brain Health



**Memory**



**Learning**



**Play**



**Concentration**

Brain health is about making the most of your brain and helping reduce some risks to it as you age.

# Did you know that...

**The brain has  
the ability to  
change and  
adapt**

**A lifetime of  
curiosity and  
learning new  
skills can help  
you to function  
longer and better**

**Cognitive  
decline is not  
an inevitable  
part of  
ageing**

**Activity, attitude  
and simple  
lifestyle changes  
can boost your  
brain health**

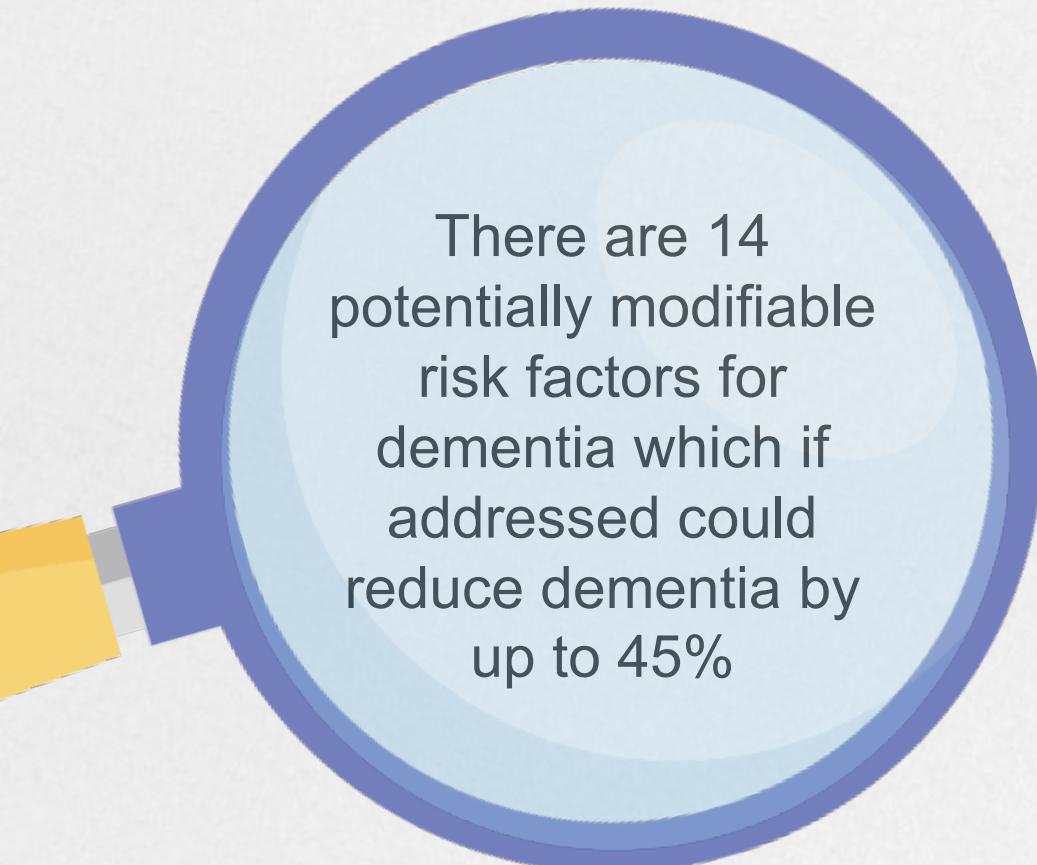


We understand a great deal more about what impacts our brain health than we did even ten years ago.

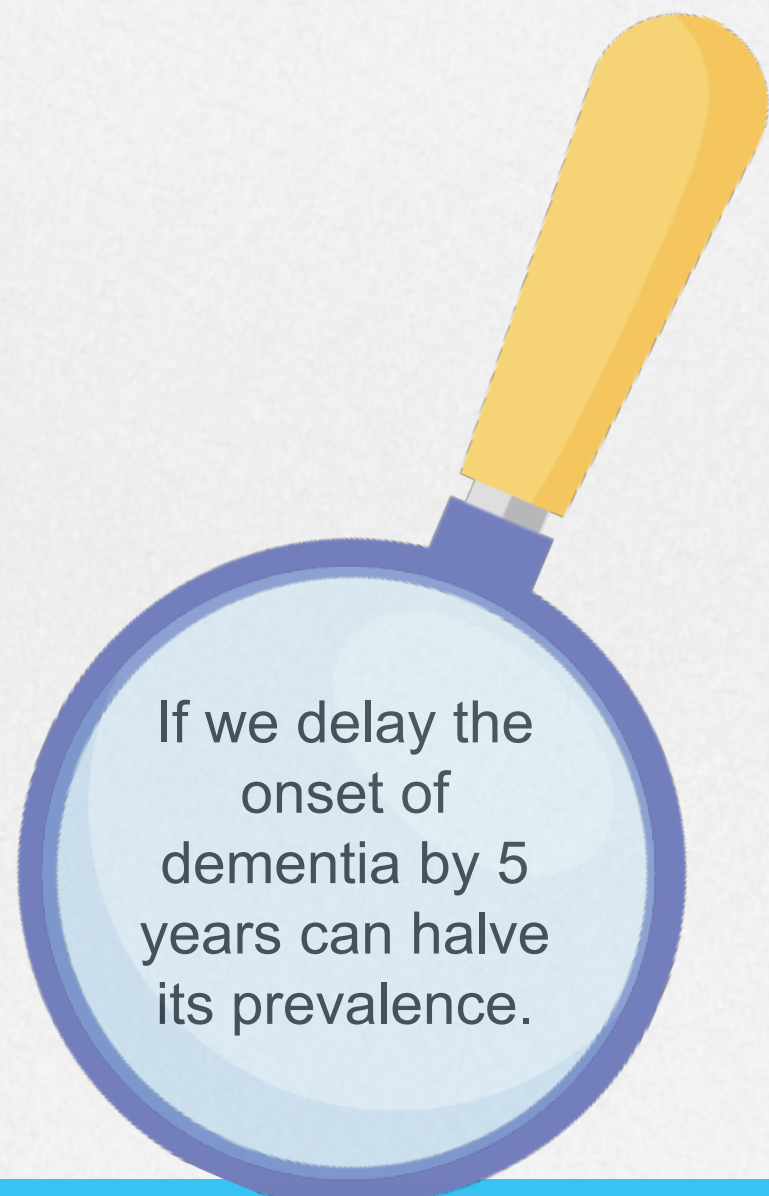
- For most people, the diseases that lead to dementia start in midlife and the onset of these diseases is driven by many factors.
- Some of which we can't change, such as family history and genetics, but many of which we can, such as our lifestyle.



# Evidence supports that



There are 14 potentially modifiable risk factors for dementia which if addressed could reduce dementia by up to 45%



If we delay the onset of dementia by 5 years can halve its prevalence.

Over **64,000**

people are currently living with dementia in Ireland

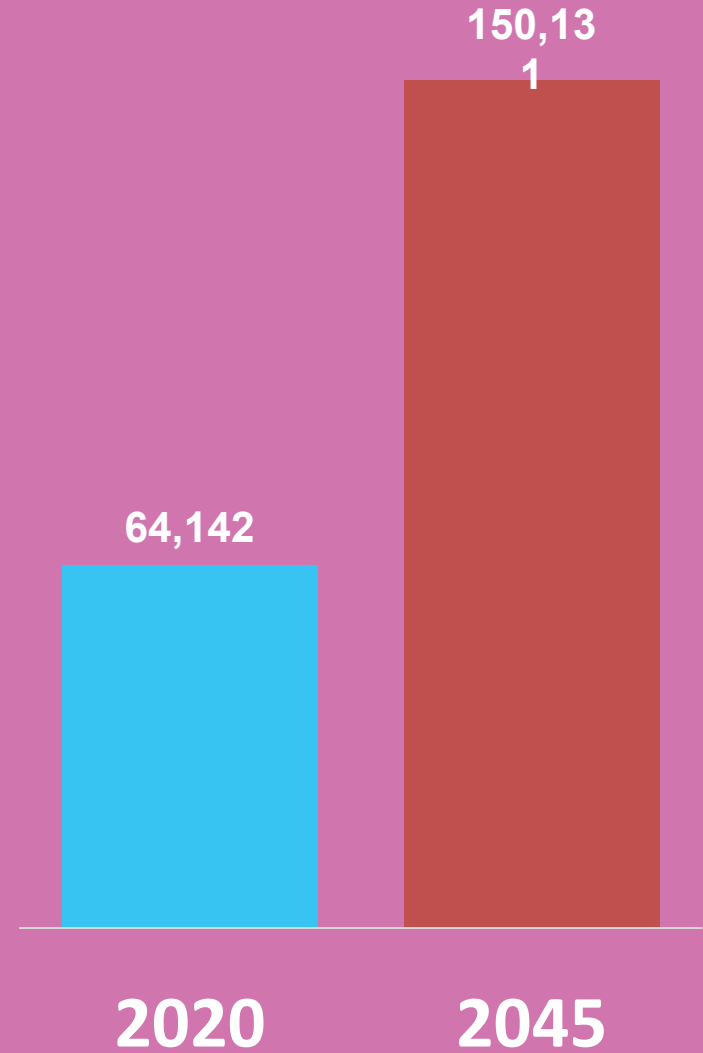




The number of people with the condition will more than

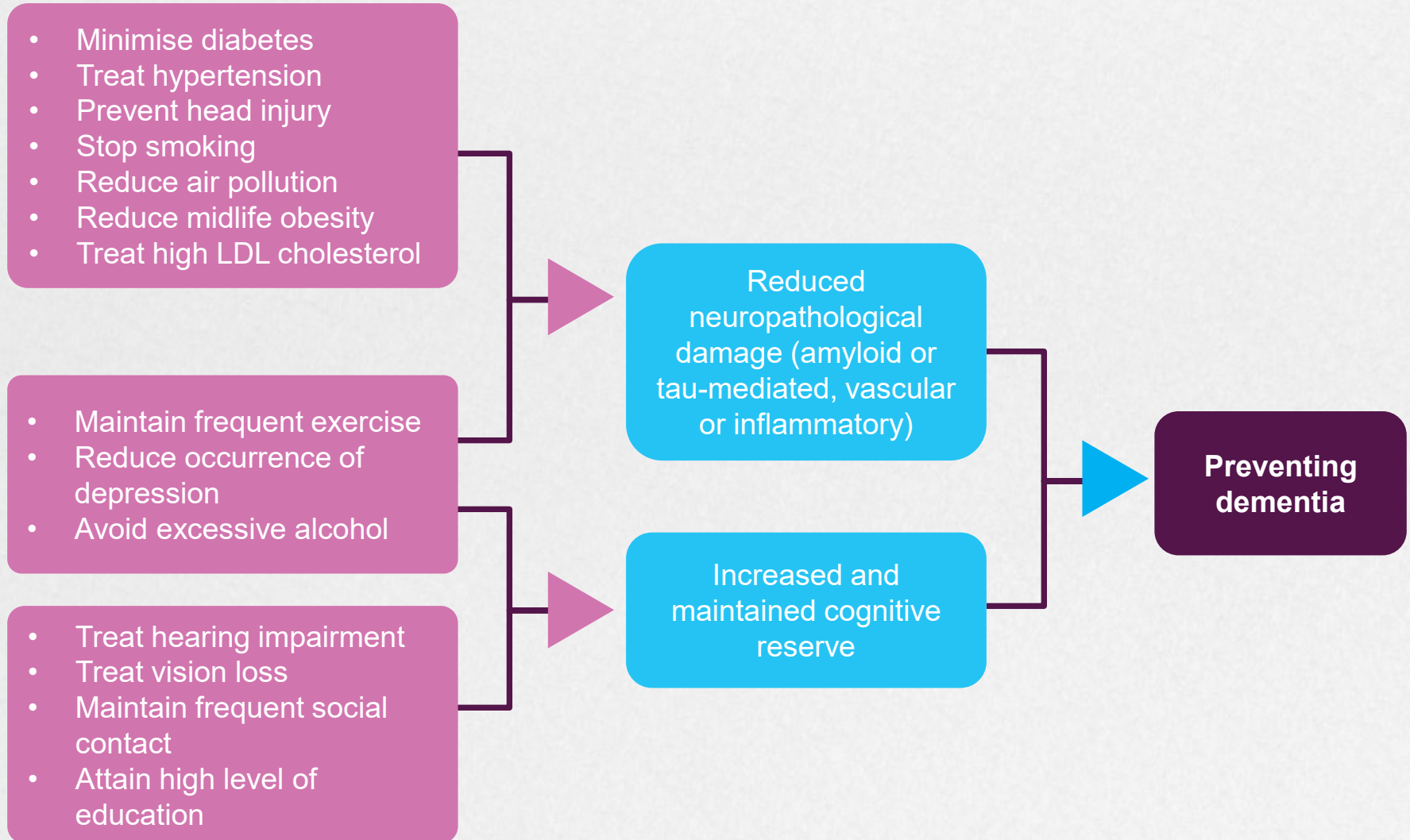
# double

in the next 25 years





# How does it work?

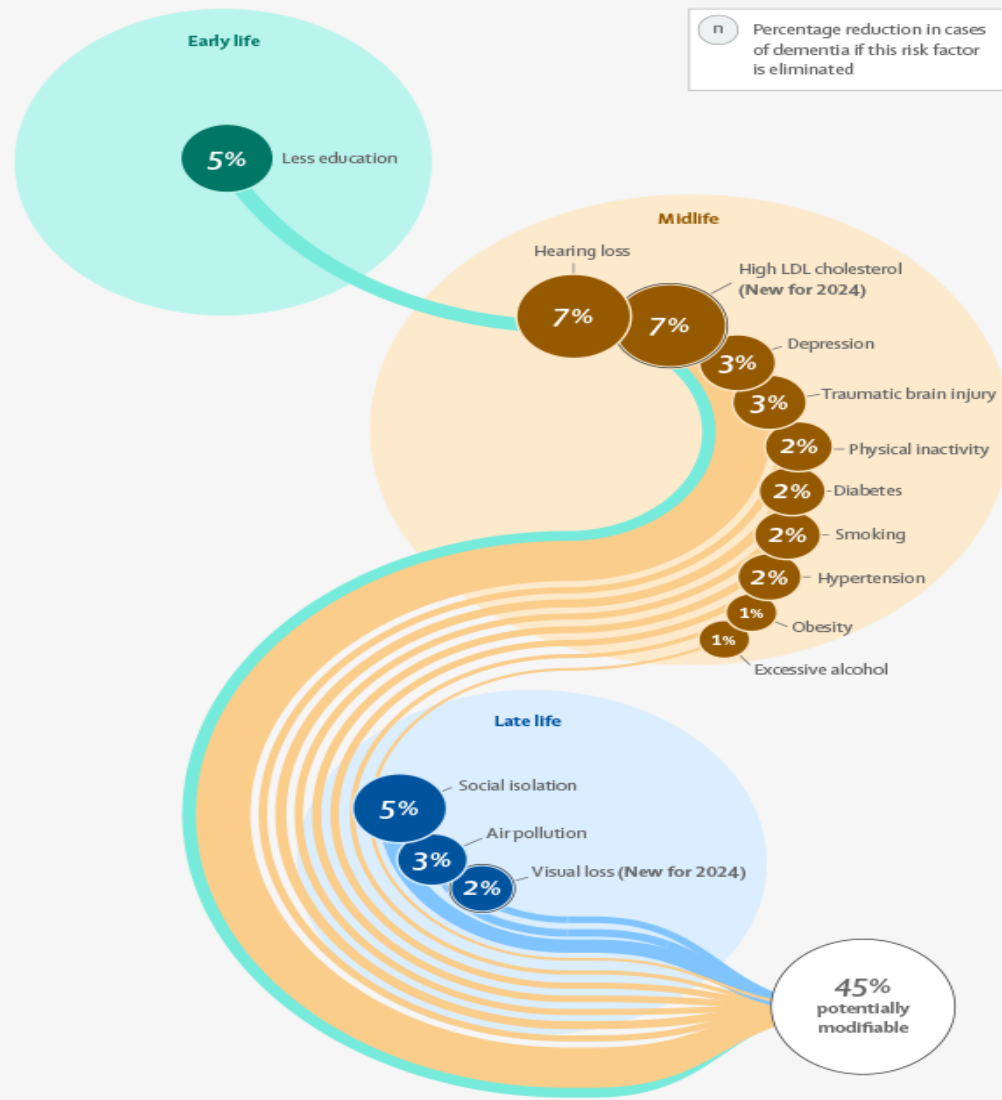


# Dementia risk factors across the lifecycle

- Lifestyle has a profound impact on our brain health
- Very similar to advice given for stroke, heart disease and cancer

## Risk factors for dementia — 2024 update

The 2024 update to the standing Lancet Commission on dementia prevention, intervention, and care adds two new risk factors (high LDL cholesterol and vision loss) and indicates that nearly half of all dementia cases worldwide could be prevented or delayed by addressing 14 modifiable risk factors.



Infographic: Dementia prevention, intervention and care:  
2024 Report of the Lancet Commission, Prof Gill Livingston.

Read the full commission update at [thelancet.com/commissions/dementia-prevention-intervention-care](https://www.thelancet.com/commissions/dementia-prevention-intervention-care)

Livingston G, Huntley J, Liu KY, et al. Dementia prevention, intervention, and care: 2024 report of the Lancet standing Commission. *The Lancet* 2024; published online July 31. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(24\)01296-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(24)01296-0).

# Good overall health may help to maintain brain health



We can shape our messages around these themes



Love your heart



Stay sharp



Keep connected

# Diet and Nutrition

**A balanced diet is a good starting point to look after our body and mind.**

- Nuts, seeds, beans, whole grains, plant based foods
- Lean meats and fish
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Olive oil



**A wide variety of nourishing foods provides the energy and nutrients you need to keep your brain healthy.**

# Physical activity

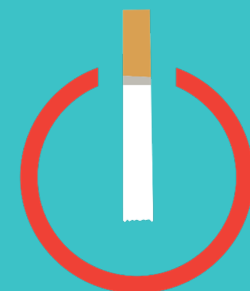
Being physically active can boost your brain.



Every adult should aim to include 150 minutes of physical activity, such as brisk walking, in their week.

# High LDL Cholesterol

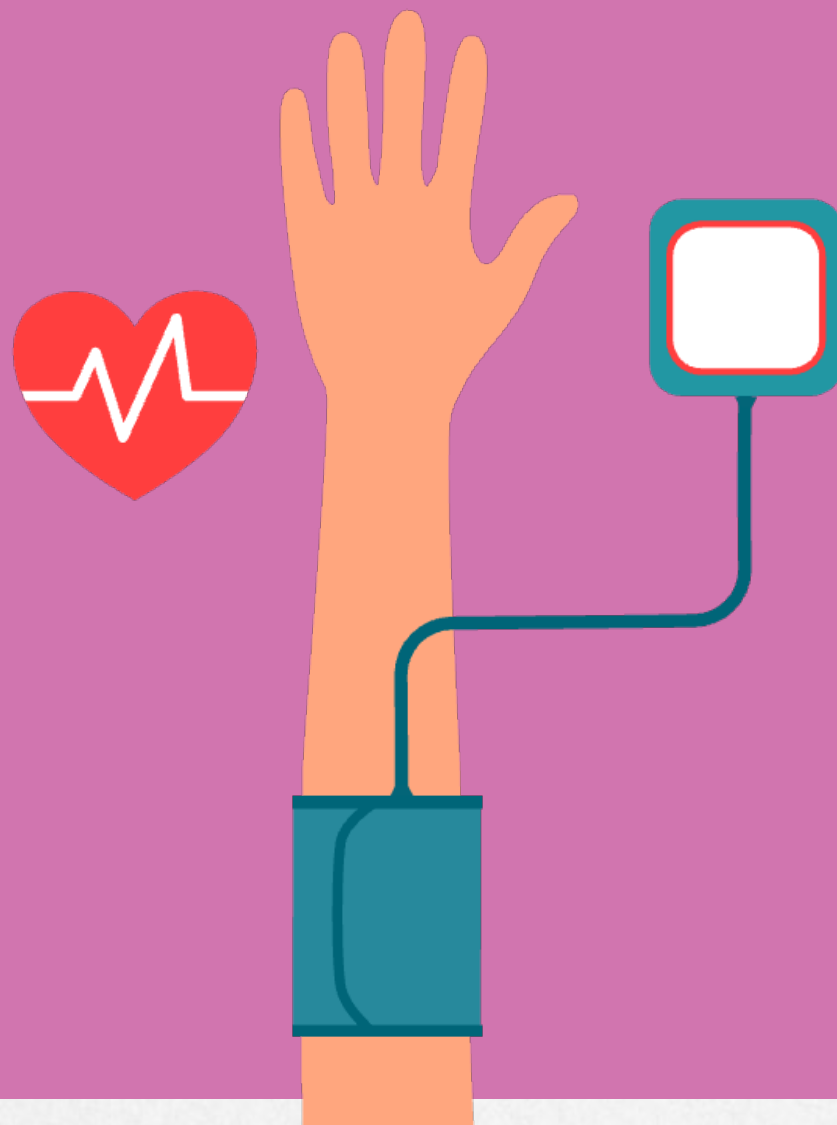
- Ensure you get your cholesterol checked regularly
- If your LDL cholesterol is too high, get it treated
- Your GP can tell you about the most suitable type of treatment, including medication
- Changing your diet, stopping smoking and exercising more can also help prevent or manage high cholesterol





# Blood pressure

Exercising and eating healthily, reducing stress, limiting alcohol, and taking medication if prescribed, can help to keep your blood pressure low.



# Alcohol

Consuming alcohol can affect the way your brain functions.



Example of a standard drink

- a small glass of wine (12.5% volume)
- a half pint of normal beer
- an alcopop (275ml bottle)

## **Drink in moderation:**

Drinks should be spread out over the week.

Have 2 to 3 alcohol-free days per week.

Stay within the guidelines

- 11 standard drinks for women
- 17 standards drinks for men

# Smoking

- Quitting smoking may reduce your risk of developing dementia as well as your risk of developing cancers and heart disease.
- Did you know that if you stop smoking for 28 days and you're five times more likely to stop for good?



# Keep connected

- Social isolation is increasingly thought to be a risk factor for dementia
- It also increases the risk of hypertension, heart conditions and depression
- Let's get outside even for 10 or 20 minutes to get the mood boosting effects of fresh air and natural scenery
- You can also try a new hobby, stay in touch with family and friends, or reach out to services within your community



# Keep connected

Interacting with others can give us great sustenance in terms of brain health.

- Join a book club
- Community group
- Men's or Women's shed
- Choir or a sports team
- Have a regular coffee morning

The local library also has lists of activities.



# Hearing Loss

Hearing loss is associated with a higher risk of developing dementia.

- Let's protect our ears from excessive noise exposure
- Get your hearing tested, if you are having difficulties
- Do wear a hearing aid if it is prescribed





# Vision Loss

You can take steps to look after your eye health.

- Rest the eyes. Take a break from staring at a screen every 20 minutes
- Wear protective eyewear
- Wear sunglasses. Choose sunglasses that protect the eyes from 99–100% of both UVA and UVB radiation
- Get your vision tested if you are having difficulties
- Get treatment for vision loss





# Stay sharp

- Keep your brain active
- Get a good night's sleep
- Take time for your mental wellbeing
- Learn ways to keep stress at bay to benefit your physical health, brain fitness and overall memory



# Brain injuries

Prevent head injury, including concussion, which can occur due to falls or traffic accidents.

## Take precautions, such as

- wear the correct protective headwear for sports, cycling, work, etc.
- wear a seatbelt
- avoid falls especially for older adults and children



# Education

Cognitive stimulation is important for all of us, but especially in early life.

Higher education levels in childhood and lifelong learning can reduce your dementia risk.

It is never too late to learn something new.



# Air pollution

## Breathe carefully

The environment can affect our brain health.

- Reduce exposure to air pollution and second-hand tobacco smoke.
- Create environments which support brain health.



# Be inspired and empowered

There is a lot we can do to look after our brain health regardless of our age or current health status.



## Key messages

It is never too early or too late to look after your brain health.

Our lifestyle can affect our brain health and risk of developing dementia.

**Eat, exercise  
and sleep well  
to help keep  
your brain  
healthy**

**Stimulate  
your brain by  
being with  
people and  
learning new  
skills**

**Manage  
stress to  
stay as calm  
as possible**

# Resources

**Hello Brain** provides easy-to-understand scientific information about brain health. [www.hellobrain.eu/en](http://www.hellobrain.eu/en)

**The Global Brain Health Institute** brings together a powerful mix of disciplines, professions, backgrounds, skills, perspectives, and approaches to develop new science-based solutions for brain health. [www.gbhi.org/about](http://www.gbhi.org/about)

**Ask about Alcohol** - visit [www.askaboutalcohol.ie](http://www.askaboutalcohol.ie) or call the HSE Alcohol Helpline on 1800 459 459.

**Quit** - visit [www.quit.ie](http://www.quit.ie) or call the QUITline on 1800 201 203

**Eating Well** guidelines <https://www2.hse.ie/living-well/healthy-eating/>

**Be active** guidelines <https://www2.hse.ie/living-well/exercise/active-for-your-lifestyle/>

**Mental Health** - visit [www.yourmentalhealth.ie](http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie) for ways to look after your mental health.



# Helpline and information

If you or a loved one are concerned about dementia you can contact the

National Helpline provided by the Alzheimer Society of Ireland at  
1800 341 341

You can also find out more about dementia here

<https://alzheimer.ie/about-dementia/i-am-worried/>