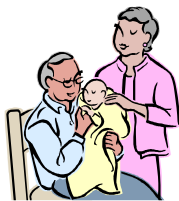


## Brain Food

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Living longer is a good thing, right? But it comes with a few drawbacks. One of those is the possibility of becoming senile; memory health ranked second only to heart health among the greatest medical worries of those ages 55 to 64 (Alzheimer's Association, 2005). Slowly but surely, scientists are coming closer to untangling the secrets to preventing dementia. And part of the answer may lie in eating a healthy diet!



Look at what recent research shows as possibly protective actions.

- **Eat a colorful diet.** A diet based on fruits, vegetables and whole-grain foods protects brain cells. B vitamins help lower homocysteine, a blood chemical linked to heart attacks, strokes, and possibly dementia.
- **Control blood pressure.** Untreated blood pressure – whether it's too high or too low, can increase the risk of dementia. Controlling your blood pressure not only protects the heart, but the brain!
- **Prevent/control Type 2 diabetes.** There is strong evidence that diabetes increases the risk of dementia. Diabetes damages blood vessels, including those in the brain.
- **Control high blood cholesterol.** High blood cholesterol is known to promote atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries). It may also contribute brain plaque in Alzheimer's.

- **Improve HDL levels.** HDL (high density lipoprotein) is the good cholesterol that aids in protecting the heart. One of the strongest factors that positively influences mental performance is a high level of HDL.
- **Increase physical activity.** Older persons who get regular exercise are less likely to decline mentally. Regular exercise benefits the brain, just as it benefits the heart – by lowering blood pressure, controlling weight, and improving cholesterol levels and blood sugar.
- **The bottom line:** What helps your cardiovascular system also appears to benefit your brain and protect it from disease. What affects the health of large blood vessels also affects the small vessels of the brain him or her to speak slowly. If language is a problem, make sure to have someone else help explain.



### Community Resources

Consumer Protection Hotline	800-392-8222
Elderly Abuse & Neglect Hotline	800-392-0210
Mental Health Crisis Line	888-279-8188
Consumer Affairs/Clients Rights	800-364-9687



*Creative Living is written by University of Missouri Extension Regional Specialists for seniors in English and Spanish. This newsletter is a partnership among the Guadalupe Center, Alzheimer's Association, and University of Missouri Extension. If you have any suggestions for its content, please contact Nina Chen, Ph.D., Human Development Specialist, 816-252-5051.*

*Spanish translation provided by Kelly Loeb through Support of Alzheimer's Association.*