healthy habits for a healthier you

Aging and health

- Aging well depends on your:
  - Genes
  - Environment
  - Lifestyle
- Lifestyle choices may help keep your body and brain healthy

The brain and how it works

- The brain is the control center of the body
- There are 100 billion nerve cells, or neurons, creating a branching network
- Signals traveling through the brain form memories, thoughts and feelings
- Alzheimer’s disease destroys brain cells

Heart-brain connection

- 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
  - 25% of blood from every heartbeat goes to the brain

Dementia and Alzheimer’s

- Dementia is caused by many different diseases and conditions
- It is not part of normal aging
- Alzheimer’s disease is most common cause of dementia
- Known risks for Alzheimer’s includes age, genetics, head injury, cardiovascular factors and fewer years of formal education
- Therapies for Alzheimer’s can treat symptoms, but cannot cure, prevent or even slow disease progression

Program overview

- Identify the reasons for taking care of yourself as you age
- List strategies to age well in the following areas:
  - Cognitive activity
  - Physical health and exercise
  - Diet and nutrition
  - Social engagement
- Make your own plan for healthy aging using the *Healthy Habits for a Healthier You* workbook
Taking care of yourself as you age

Cognitive activity

What we know
- Keeping your mind active forms new connections among brain cells
- Cognitive activity encourages blood flow to the brain
- Mentally stimulating activities may possibly maintain or even improve cognition
- Engaging in formal education will keep your brain healthy and can provide protection against developing dementia

Cognitive activity

What we can do
- Read books and articles that challenge and inspire you
- Complete puzzles and play games that are challenging for you
- Learn new skills or hobbies
- Engage in ongoing learning

Physical health and exercise
Physical health and exercise

What we know
- Cardiovascular activity may reduce your risk of cognitive decline
- Regular and vigorous exercise leads to increased blood flow – other physical activities may also yield benefits
- There is no single recipe

What we can do
- Do something you like
- Start out small
- Move safely
- Get your heart rate up
- Ask friends to join you
- Check with your doctor before you start

Physical health and exercise

What we can do
- Stop smoking
- Avoid excess alcohol
- Get adequate sleep
- Avoid head injury
- Manage stress
- Treat depression
- Visit your doctor regularly

Diet and nutrition

What we can do
Monitor numbers and take action
- Blood pressure
- Blood sugar
- Weight
- Cholesterol
Diet and nutrition

What we know
- What’s good for the heart may also be good for the brain
- Nutritious food is fuel for the brain
- Following some dietary guidelines can reduce your risk of heart disease, cancer, Parkinson’s disease, Alzheimer’s disease, stroke and diabetes

What we can do
- **EAT**
  - Vegetables
  - Fruits
  - Nuts, beans and whole grains
  - Lean meats, fish and poultry
  - Vegetable oils
- **AVOID**
  - Saturated/trans fats
  - Processed foods
  - Solid fat, sugar and salt
  - Deep-fried foods
  - Unhealthy fast foods

Social engagement

What we know
- Social engagement is associated with living longer with fewer disabilities
- Staying engaged in the community offers you an opportunity to maintain your skills
- Remaining both socially and mentally active may support brain health and possibly delay the onset of dementia
Social engagement

What we can do
• Visit with friends and family
• Engage with others
• Stay involved in the community
• Volunteer outside the home
• Join a group or club

Putting all four pieces together

Take care of your health
• Eat right
• Get moving
• Keep your mind active
• Stay connected with others

Combine all four to achieve maximum benefits

What you can do NOW

• Begin today
• Start small and build
• Do what you enjoy and stick with it
• Make healthy choices
• Make a plan
• Get support from others
• Have fun

Be a savvy consumer

• If it’s too good to be true – it’s probably not true!
• Be cautious when you hear huge promises or reports of miracle cures
• Do thorough research
• Consult trusted, reputable professionals
  – Your doctor
  – Your local pharmacist
  – The Alzheimer’s Association

Resources

Alzheimer’s Association
- 800-272-3900
- alz.org

Programs in community
- Local Area Agency on Aging
- Local senior centers
- Community park programs
- Local health clubs, YMCAs and YWCAs

National resources
- National Institutes of Health/National Institute on Aging
  - "What’s on Your Plate?"
  - "Go4Life"
- Administration on Community Living
  - "Brain Health as You Age"
- U.S. Department of Agriculture: Cooperative Extension System
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Questions?

Alzheimer’s Association
We’re here. All day, every day.
24/7 Helpline: 800.272.3900
alz.org®