9 Life-Changing Tips... Proven To Reduce the Risk of Dementia

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THE HOUSE OF HEARING

Introductory Letter from Dr. Darrow

Aging is a natural, on-going, universal and irreversible process. The one constant we can all count on as we age is that *nothing stays the same!*

Aging ensures change in social, personal, cultural and economic elements of our lives.

Everyday 10,000 people turn 65 years young. This trend is expected to continue for at least the next 15+ years. And it is almost a guarantee that over the next 15 years science will continue to reduce the mortality rate and increase the average life expectancy. As a result, our health care system will be pushed to its capacity to deal with diseases such as Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular, etc. **Perhaps the most prevalent, most costly and most disabling of all diseases we will see sharply rise over the next decades is Dementia** - the mind-robbing mental disease that interrupts and interferes with every aspect of life. **Dementia is *not* a normal part of aging.**

Every 3-4 seconds another patient is diagnosed with Dementia. Rates of Dementia are estimated to triple in the next 30 years. Unlike the other diseases listed above, with Dementia the physical body is estimated to outlive the individual's mental capabilities by 10 or more years! There is no cure for this catastrophic disease, but there are t**reatments available, including several ways to decrease your risk of developing Dementia.**

In this report, I will provide you with the ***'9 Transformative Tips Proven to Reduce Your Risk of Dementia'*** that I share with every patient. I encourage you to read through, share with family and friends, and get started on day 1 to make the positive change in your life that can help you maintain a healthy brain as you age and to stay engaged with your family, friends and community. Simple changes such as eating better, sleeping more, exercise, regular visits to your PCP and treating your hearing and visual losses as you age… can all lead to a long, healthy life and significantly reduce your risk of developing Dementia.

Yours In Active-Aging,

Dr. Keith Darrow, PhD

Dr. Keith Darrow

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1 Active Aging: stay young, stay smart, and stay engaged!

Active Aging – the process of optimizing opportunities for better health, continuing development of knowledge, and increased security in order to maximize quality of life as you age. The word 'active' is used to describe a person's involvement with social, physical, economic, spiritual and civic affairs. We all share the same goal to maintain autonomy and independence as we age, and thus we must rely on preserving the tenants of interdependence (socialization and reliance on family and loved ones) and intergenerational solidarity (maintaining companionship with age-matched peers) to insure active aging.

Both Social Isolation and Depression are major risk factors for the development of Dementia, and both increase as we age. Being a lifelong learner and staying active is important to maintain a healthy, active brain, and can also reduce your risk of cognitive decline and dementia. Some studies have shown that social activities, larger social networks, and a history of social contact are associated with better cognitive function and reduced risk for cognitive decline.

Tips for Active Aging include:

- Share a meal with family and friends 3-5 times per week
- Commit to an aerobics / exercise regiment
- Learn a new hobby each year
- Play an instrument (learn a new instrument if you already know how to play one)
- If you love to read…. Keep reading. If you don't read much – try to read a book every other month
- Participate in classes at your local senior center
- Volunteering at a local hospital, shelter, etc.,
- Go back to school! Many local Universities offer free tuition to individuals over the age of 65.

2 Visit your Primary Care Physician (not just when you are sick!)

One of your best resources for healthy aging is your Primary Care Physician (PCP). As you age, the risk of developing diseases increases also. Successful treatment of any medical disease, including Dementia, are always most effective when treated early. Researchers at the Journal of Health Affairs found that patients with a PCP have better management of chronic diseases, lower overall health care costs, and a higher level of satisfaction with their care.

New screening tools are available for your PCP to help detect early onset cognitive impairment associated with Dementia.

Your PCP can coordinate patient care all in one place. Within a PCP's practice, you have the ability to access a wide spectrum of health services, including preventive care, such as cancer screenings; chronic care for conditions like asthma, hypertension, and diabetes; and acute care for symptoms like cough, stomach pain, or high fever. By developing a relationship with a PCP, you are ensuring that other physicians and medical staff within the practice also know your medical history. This "health care team" can more easily detect patterns in your health and recommend lifestyle changes to prevent future complications requiring expensive specialty care. For example, simple testing during a visit with your PCP can reveal health problems, such as early cognitive decline, that may go unnoticed leading to more serious issues later in life.

Regularly visiting a PCP helps you to look out for your health and well being - not just for today - but also for the future.

The reason for routine visits with your PCP include:

- Identifying your risk factors of chronic medical diseases
- Detection of symptomless diseases
- Receive education on practicing healthy behaviors
- To update clinical data
- Create a meaningful and lasting relationship with your physician as you age

3 Eat Better

We all know that we can eat better, but very few of us know that certain foods may significantly reduce your risk of developing Dementia. And while there are many readily available supplements, research shows that the body does not absorb supplements as effectively as it does natural foods.

The American Brain Council estimates that 80% of people understand what it takes to maintain a healthy lifestyle – yet, it is also estimated that only 20% actually live a healthy lifestyle. Dietary patterns have long been associated with decreasing cognitive decline and reducing your risk of dementia and researchers have now suggested that those who follow certain diets can lower their dementia risk by as much as 50%.

One of the easiest things we can do to reduce our risk of developing Dementia is to keep these foods a permanent feature on your shopping list!

1 – Berries, Berries, and more Berries. You likely already know that berries - such as strawberries, blueberries, and raspberries - are considered super foods. This is due to the fact that they deliver a ton of antioxidants in each bite!

Antioxidants have long been linked to enhancing cognitive function in dementia and Alzheimer's patients. However, a study published by the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease discovered that high-antioxidant berries were able to reduce plaque in the brain, which is thought to cause Alzheimer's.

2 – Super Spices - Do you know what spices like turmeric, cocoa, cinnamon, and nutmeg have in common? According to the journal, Central Nervous Systems Agents in Medicinal Chemistry, these spices contain certain polyphenols and compounds with numerous cognitive advantages.

The journal research outlines the many gluco-recovery, anti-inflammatory, and antioxidant properties in these spices and theorizes on their Alzheimer's prevention connection.

3 – Go Nuts!! (And bring the Omega-3's with you!) One of the surest way to beat age-related mental decline is to wash down a liter of extra virgin olive oil with 210g of mixed nuts a week, scientists say. Dr Emilio Ros, of the Hospital Clinic, Barcelona, states that "Our results suggest that in an older population a Mediterranean diet supplemented with olive oil or nuts may counteract age-related cognitive decline. In addition, research from the Journal of the American Academy of Physician Assistants has found evidence that olive oil and coconut oil, both rich in polyphenol content and neuro-protective abilities, can be effective in the fight against dementia and Alzheimer's disease

Natural foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids—namely nuts, flaxseeds, and certain types of fish—have long been linked to Alzheimer's prevention. Research in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease as well as the European Journal of Nutrition, details how omega-3-rich foods can help decrease the rate of cognitive decline in Alzheimer's patients.

4 – Pass The Salad, Please! Known as the 'forgotten vitamin', vitamin K can play a critical role in anti-aging and may prevent cognitive decline and Dementia. Leafy greens - such as spinach and kale – act as a 'brain-shield' when it comes to warding off age-related cognitive decline. According to findings from the Journal of Nutritional Health and Aging, increasing your consumption of leafy greens will decrease the risk of Alzheimer's and dementia—and they're just plain good for you!

P.S. If you're currently taking blood thinners—this tip is NOT for you as you should stay away from foods high in vitamin-K.

4 Treat Your Hearing Loss

Recent research has found that **hearing loss can increase the risk of developing Dementia by 200-500%.** This report, from researchers at Johns Hopkins Medical Center and the National Institute on Aging found that individuals with hearing loss (when compared to participants with normal hearing) are at a significantly higher risk of developing Dementia over time. The more hearing loss they had, the higher their likelihood of developing the memory-robbing disease. "A lot of people ignore hearing loss because it's such a slow and insidious process as we age," Dr. Frank Lin (of Johns Hopkins Medical Center) says. "Even if people feel as if they are not affected, we're showing that it may well be a more serious problem."

Three risk factors that appear to link hearing loss and Dementia include:

1. Social Isolation - Withdrawal from social situations is common in individuals with hearing loss. Feelings of embarrassment, fear of making mistakes in conversations, and feeling like you are not part of the conversation are common in individuals with hearing impairment – even those with a mild impairment.

2. Cerebral Atrophy - Multiple scientific studies have demonstrated that hearing impairment is associated with accelerated brain atrophy in both the overall brain, as well as even more advanced reductions in volume associated with the memory, hearing, speech and language portions of the brain.

3. Cognitive Overload (i.e. Working Your Brain Too Hard To Hear) - Hearing loss is not normal, and neither is the excess strain that is puts on your brain. While hearing loss may be more common (up to 50% of all people 60-70 years old have hearing loss, and 66% of people over 70 suffer from hearing loss), it is critical that hearing loss be treated. With hearing loss, the brain is constantly on 'overload' trying to fill in the missing pieces, and follow the conversation.

According to Dr. Doraiswamy (Neuropsychologist from Duke University): ***"The benefits of correcting hearing loss on cognition are twice as large as the benefits from any cognitive-enhancing drugs now on the market. It should be the first thing we focus on."***

Promising new research, from multiple studies, has indicated that treating hearing loss can provide 2 major benefits:

- Significant improvement in cognitive function
- Treating hearing loss may reduce, or even eliminate their risk of developing cognitive decline and Dementia.

5 Get Your Eyes Checked!

Elderly people with untreated poor vision are significantly more likely to suffer from Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia than their normal seeing counterparts, according to a study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*. According to Dr. Mary Rogers of University of Michigan, "Visual problems can have serious consequences and are very common among the elderly, but many of them are not seeking treatment." Poor vision, like poor hearing, can reduce the amount of social and physical activities in adults – thus increasing the risk of developing Dementia. Early treatment of visual problems may delay the onset of Dementia.

In addition, according to the American Optometric Association, significant near-vision loss in older age may correlate with increased dementia risk. According to this study from researchers at the Univ. Bordeaux in France, moderate to severe near vision loss can double an individual's chances of developing dementia.

6 Exercise... it does a body, and mind, good!

Exercising regularly will make your heart and blood circulatory system more efficient. It will also help to lower your cholesterol and keep your blood pressure at a healthy level, decreasing your risk of developing some kinds of dementia. Research from Dr. Kramer, at the University of Illinois, found that brain volume (as measured in an MRI) actually increases in people who regularly exercise. For most people, a minimum of 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week, such as cycling or fast walking, is recommended.

Recommended exercises to help maintain a healthy senior lifestyle and possibly reduce the risk of Developing Dementia:

Endurance Exercises

- **Walking briskly with no incline.** Walking is great to get the senior heart rate up, without straining joints. 15 to 30 minutes of brisk walking 3 to 4 times a week is a great way to help seniors maintain both physical and mental fitness.

- **Swimming**. Water is great for old joints as it is buoyant and provides a free-flow, low impact environment for senior workouts. Either lap swimming or water aerobics are great for seniors. Many health centers offer either open lap swim or senior water aerobics classes, so check with your local community pool.
- **Gardening**. Gardening offers an enjoyable alternative to working out, although it's more difficult to measure the exercise. If gardening is the desired workout, make sure it's alternated with another endurance option.
- **Cycling on stationary bicycle**. Cycling on a stationary bicycle can be a senior favorite as it can be done while watching tv. 15 to 30 minutes on the bicycle is ideal to get the heart rate up.

There are additional resistance and Strength Exercises that can also be healthy for the body, and mind. Remember – always consult your physician before starting a new exercise regiment.

7 Stop Smoking

If you haven't already done so… put down the cigarette! If lung cancer and other significant pulmonary disease hasn't got you to stop smoking, than perhaps this will - **Stopping smoking could reduce dementia risk!**

Smoking can cause your arteries to narrow, which can lead to a rise in your blood pressure. It also increases your risk of developing cardiovascular diseases, cancer and dementia.

8 Reduce Stress

We can all use less stress and more time to meditate… now more than ever. Many studies have linked anxiety with the development of Alzheimer's, especially in people who are already at risk for the disease. A recent study from the Rotman Research Institute in Canada showed that people who had mild cognitive impairment and reported high levels of anxiety were 135% more likely to develop Alzheimer's.

Chronic or persistent stress can take a heavy toll on the brain, leading to shrinkage in a key memory area, hampering nerve cell growth, and increasing the risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Yet simple stress management tools can minimize its harmful effects.

Get your stress levels in check with these proven techniques

Breathe! Quiet your stress response with deep, abdominal breathing. Restorative breathing is powerful, simple, and free!

Schedule daily relaxation activities. Keeping stress under control requires regular effort. Make relaxation a priority, whether it's a walk in the park, playtime with your dog, yoga, or a soothing bath.

Nourish inner peace. Regular meditation, prayer, reflection, and religious practice may immunize you against the damaging effects of stress.

Make fun a priority. All work and no play is not good for your stress levels or your brain. Make time for leisure activities that bring you joy, whether it be stargazing, playing the piano, or working on your bike.

Keep your sense of humor. This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress.

Be sure to make time for **meditation**. Resting your mind may be more helpful than you think in Dementia prevention. A recent study from Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center has found that meditation plays an important role in slowing the progression of Alzheimer's. Individuals who performed meditation and yoga regularly atrophy (shrinkage) parts of the brain and better brain connectivity than the control group. Meditation can increase protective tissue in the brain, can help seniors feel less stressed and reduces the hormone cortisol, which has been known to increase the risk of developing dementia.

9 Sleep Better

Lack of sleep has been linked to a myriad of health problems including stress and increased cortisol, both of which are risk factors for Alzheimer's. In addition, a waste-draining system that clears the brain of beta-amyloid is more active while we sleep.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, insufficient sleep is a public health epidemic. In fact, sleep can be just as important as a healthy diet and regular exercise. Lack of sleep has been linked to a myriad of health problems including:

- Cognitive dysfunction
- Depression
- Stress
- Type II diabetes
- Weight gain

More concerning, a new study indicates that lack of sleep may lead to Alzheimer's. Emerging research from the University of Rochester Medical Center has found that waste-draining system they call the "glymphatic system" is ten times more active during sleep than while awake. This nocturnal cleaning system removes proteins called amyloid-beta, which accumulate into the plaques that contribute to Alzheimer's and dementia.

So what if you're not getting those eight hours? Are you destined to get Alzheimer's? No, not necessarily – and don't buy any sleep remedies just yet. You might just have leftover sleep patterns from your ancestors. Remember… when it comes to sleep, **quality** is more important that quantity.

- If you cannot sleep eight continuous hours, then spread it out
- Sleep in four hour chunks
- Take naps

The quality of the sleep you get is the most restorative, not the quantity of it. Do whatever it is that is most natural for you or your loved one.

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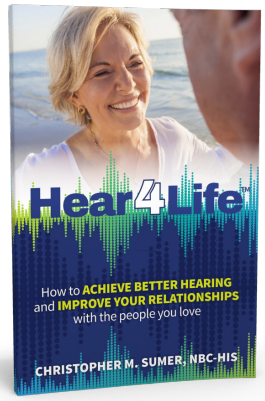

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