

Healthy Heart, Healthy Brain...

The River of Life Flows Through the Heart, Protecting the Mind and Body

Everyone slows down as they get older, both in body and mind. But big changes with forgetfulness, thinking, or how you solve problems that make it hard to get through the day don't happen to everyone. These changes could be a sign of early dementia or Alzheimer's disease.



5.7 Million

Americans have
Alzheimer's disease



1 in 10

People age 65 and older
has Alzheimer's



1 in 3

American Indians over 65
develops dementia, including
Alzheimer's

Elders with **heart disease, high blood pressure,**
or **diabetes** have a much higher risk of developing
Alzheimer's or other dementias.

Key steps you can take for a healthy mind, heart, and body:



- ◆ **Call your doctor** today for an appointment to talk about how to keep your mind and heart healthy.
- ◆ **Schedule** "wellness" checkups and health screenings every year. Blood pressure and diabetes screenings are usually free with Medicare Part B or through the Indian Health Service.
- ◆ **Get a little exercise** every day.
- ◆ **Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables** and foods low in salt and sugar.
- ◆ **Stop smoking** and chewing tobacco.
- ◆ **Get help** managing high blood pressure, diabetes, high blood cholesterol, and depression or anxiety.
- ◆ **Protect your head.** Falls are the number one cause of head injury in older adults.
- ◆ **If you have trouble** with memory or forgetfulness that makes it hard to get through the day, see your doctor right away.

You can do things today to protect your mind and help try to prevent or slow dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

Turn over for your checklist to help keep the river of life flowing freely.



Keep Your River Flowing ...

Your heart is like the start of a free-flowing river. Veins and arteries that take blood away from and to the heart are like many connected small streams that flow all through the body, including the brain, feeding it with oxygen and energy.

You have to work to keep the streams flowing through your body from becoming clogged and the heart from being hurt.

Working with Your Doctor

- ◆ **Make an appointment** for health screening tests and “wellness” checkups every year. They are usually free with Medicare Part B or through the Indian Health Service.
- ◆ **Have your blood pressure checked** regularly and know your numbers. A blood pressure of less than 120/80 mmHg is normal.
- ◆ **Ask your doctor** to go over how to measure and track your own blood pressure results and find out where you can go in your community to check your blood pressure yourself.
- ◆ **Have your cholesterol checked** regularly and know your numbers. Talk to your doctor about what you can do if your cholesterol is high.
- ◆ **If you do not have diabetes**, have your blood sugar level checked regularly. Blood sugar should be less than 100 mg/dl.
- ◆ **If you do have diabetes**, have your blood sugar and A1C levels checked regularly, and work with your doctor to get them to normal levels. Your A1C should be less than 5.7%.
- ◆ **Talk with your doctor** about your medicines and vitamins to make sure they do not cause problems with your memory, sleep, or brain function.

Working on Your Own

- ◆ **Be active** or walk every day. Try to get 1 ½ - 2 hours of exercise each week.
- ◆ **Eat more fruits and vegetables** and less salt and sugar.
- ◆ **Take your medicine** for blood pressure and diabetes even if you feel good.
- ◆ **If you smoke** or chew tobacco, stop. Talk to your doctor if you need help quitting.
- ◆ **If you are overweight**, try to lose weight with exercise and a healthy diet. Losing even a few pounds can make a difference. Talk to your doctor for help.
- ◆ **Read food labels** to see how much salt (sodium) or fat is in your food. If you don't know how to read food labels, ask your doctor for help.
- ◆ **Limit alcoholic drinks**. No more than one drink per day for women and no more than two for men. Talk to your doctor if you need help.
- ◆ **Get at least seven hours of sleep** each night. Talk to your doctor if you have trouble sleeping.
- ◆ **Keep your mind active**. Go out and visit with people in your community, take classes, go to your senior center, play cards, and visit with others.

