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Healthy Body, Healthy Brain

Keeping your body healthy may help your brain stay healthy too.

Brain health and physical health are both important, especially as we age. A [recent CDC study](#) found that people with one or more chronic health conditions were more likely to report worsening or more frequent memory problems, also called subjective cognitive decline (SCD).

Chronic health conditions included in the report were diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, and kidney disease. SCD was most common among adults with COPD or heart disease, or who had had a stroke.

Worsening or more frequent confusion or memory loss, combined with chronic health conditions, can make it especially hard to live independently and do everyday activities like cooking, cleaning, managing health conditions and medicines, and keeping medical appointments. This may lead to worse health, and preventable hospitalizations or more severe memory loss or confusion. In some cases, SCD may put people at greater risk for Alzheimer's disease.

What Can People With Memory Loss and Chronic Health Conditions Do?

It's important to talk to your healthcare provider. Researchers found that only half of adults with SCD and a chronic condition had discussed their memory loss with a health care professional. Early diagnosis of memory loss is especially important for people with chronic health conditions. Getting checked by your healthcare provider can help determine if the symptoms you are experiencing are related to dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, or a more treatable condition such as a vitamin deficiency or medication side effects. Early diagnosis also provides an opportunity to participate in clinical trials, and more time to plan for the future.

8 Ways to Help Improve Your Brain Health

There is growing scientific evidence that healthy behaviors, which have been shown to prevent cancer, diabetes, and heart disease, also may reduce risk for SCD. Here are eight steps you can take for a healthy body and healthier brain.

1. [Quit Smoking](#)—Quitting smoking now improves your health and reduces your risk of heart disease, cancer, lung disease, and other smoking-related illnesses. Free quitline: 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).
2. [Prevent and Manage High Blood Pressure](#)—Tens of millions of adults in the United States have high blood pressure, and many do not have it under control. Learn the facts.
3. [Prevent and Manage High Cholesterol](#)—Nearly 1 in 3 American adults has high cholesterol. Learn how to manage your cholesterol levels and lower your risk.
4. [Maintain a Healthy Weight](#)—Healthy weight isn't about short-term dietary changes. Instead, it's about a lifestyle that includes healthy eating and regular physical activity.
5. [Get Enough Sleep](#)—A third of American adults report that they usually get less sleep than the recommended amount.
6. [Stay Engaged](#)—There are many ways for older adults to get involved in their local community. Here are some activities to consider.
7. [Manage Blood Sugar](#)—Learn how to manage your blood sugar if you have diabetes.
8. [If You Drink, Do So in Moderation](#)—Learn about alcohol use and your health.

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