

June is Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month and the Alzheimer's Association is raising awareness about Alzheimer's disease and brain health. This month is a great time to go purple and learn about [healthy lifestyle behaviors](#) that can help reduce the risk of cognitive decline.

There are currently more than 6 million Americans age 65 and older living with Alzheimer's, including 95,000 in South Carolina.

Age is the greatest risk factor for Alzheimer's disease, but not the only one. While some brain changes are inevitable as we age, there is a growing body of research to suggest that adopting healthy lifestyle behaviors may help our brains age healthier.

During June, the Alzheimer's Association offers these five tips to promote better brain health and help reduce the risk of cognitive decline:

Exercise regularly — Regular cardiovascular exercise helps increase blood flow to the body and brain, and there is strong evidence that regular physical activity is linked to better memory and thinking.

Maintain a heart-healthy diet — Stick to a meal schedule full of fruits and vegetables to ensure a well-balanced diet. Some evidence suggests a healthful diet is linked to cognitive performance. The Mediterranean and DASH diets, which emphasize whole grains, green leafy vegetables, fish and berries, are linked to better cognitive functioning, and help reduce risk of heart disease as well.

Get proper sleep — Maintaining a regular, uninterrupted sleep pattern benefits physical and psychological health, and helps clear waste from the brain. Adults should get at least seven hours of sleep each night and try to keep a routine bedtime.

Stay socially and mentally active — Meaningful social engagement may support cognitive health, so stay connected with friends and family. Engage your mind by doing activities that stump you, like completing a jigsaw puzzle or playing strategy games. Or challenge yourself further by learning a new language or musical instrument.

Keep your heart healthy — Recent study shows strong evidence that a

healthier heart is connected to a healthier brain. The study shows that aggressively treating high blood pressure in older adults can help reduce the development of mild cognitive impairment (MCI).

These are great steps to take at any age. Research suggests that incorporating these behaviors in combination will have the greatest benefit, but even if you begin with one or two you're moving in the right direction.

Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association leads the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's and all other dementia.™ For more information, visit www.alz.org or call the 24/7 Helpline at 800.272.3900.



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