

Healthy Heart, Healthy Brain

Steps for protecting your heart, brain, and body

Over the years, our bodies and brains change. However, memory loss that disrupts daily life or creates difficulty in completing familiar tasks is not typical aging. The changes may be early signs of dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

Learn more about Alzheimer's, dementia, and cognitive decline at dshs.texas.gov/alzheimers.

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

In 2024, nearly 7 million Americans were living with Alzheimer's disease.

This includes 459,000 people ages 65 and older living with Alzheimer's in Texas.

You can do things today to protect your brain and heart health.



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



Schedule wellness checkups and health screenings every year. Blood pressure and diabetes screenings are usually free with health insurance or Medicare Part B.



Get help managing high blood pressure, diabetes, high blood cholesterol, and depression or anxiety.



Maintain healthy habits like getting regular exercise, eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, and quitting smoking.



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.

These steps can help reduce your risk for cognitive decline and dementia.

For more information, visit dshs.texas.gov/alzheimers.

» Turn over for a checklist to help keep your heart, brain, and body healthy.

Checklist:

Keep Your Heart and Brain Healthy

Your heart and brain are connected. Arteries that take blood away from your heart flow throughout the body, including the brain, feeding it with oxygen and energy. Healthy habits help keep your arteries and veins from becoming clogged, which can harm the heart and cause strokes.

✓ Working With Your Doctor

- ❑ **Make an appointment** for health screening tests and wellness checkups every year. They are usually free with health insurance or Medicare Part B.
- ❑ **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. Ask 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.
- ❑ **Have your blood sugar checked** regularly. Keep your blood sugar levels under control to stay healthy.
- ❑ **If you have diabetes**, have your A1C levels checked regularly. Your doctor will work with you to set goals for what your A1C should be depending on your age, overall health, and history of diabetes.
- ❑ **Talk with your doctor** about your medicines and vitamins to make sure they do not cause problems with your memory, sleep, or cognition.

✓ Working on Your Own

- ❑ **Be active.** Aim for 150 minutes of moderate physical activity or 75 minutes of intense physical activity per week.
- ❑ **Take medicine for blood pressure and diabetes as prescribed.** Contact your doctor if you are experiencing side effects or have concerns.
- ❑ **Commit to quit smoking.** When you are ready to quit, the Texas Tobacco Quitline can help. Call 1-877-YES-QUIT (1-877-937-7848) or enroll online at yesquit.org.
- ❑ **Eat more fruits and vegetables** and less salt and sugar.
- ❑ **Maintain a healthy weight.** Exercise and a healthy diet can help.
- ❑ **Read food labels** to see how much salt (sodium) or fat is in your food.
- ❑ **Limit alcoholic drinks** to no more than one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men.
- ❑ **Aim for at least seven hours of sleep** each night. It's also important to have quality sleep. Try winding down before bed, stick to a sleep schedule, and create a restful environment.
- ❑ **Keep your brain active.** Socialize with people in your community, take new classes, participate in local events, play games that are challenging, and stay active.

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