

Veterans Fact Sheet: Risk Factors for Dementia

Research has identified a number of risk factors for developing dementia. The more risk factors you have, the greater the chance that you will develop dementia.

Many of these risk factors can be decreased or eliminated.

Dementia risk factors are often related to medical conditions or health behavior choices. You can choose to consistently manage a medical condition. You can also choose to eat well, exercise regularly and live a healthy life. Making these choices will reduce your risk of dementia.

What can I do to reduce my risk?

To reduce dementia risk, actively manage your medical conditions:

- If you have had more than one TBI, consider avoiding contact sports.
- If you have hearing loss, obtain a hearing aid and wear it during waking hours.
- If your doctor prescribes medication for high blood pressure, take it every day.
- If you have early diabetes, control your blood sugar levels with diet and exercise. Also, speak with your doctor and see if medications are necessary.
- If you become depressed, speak with your doctor about taking medications.
- Speak with your doctor or a nutritionist to make the best food choices based on your medical condition.

To further reduce dementia risk, practice healthy habits:

- Reduce depression risk by getting good sleep, exercising and being social.
- If you smoke cigarettes, choose a quit smoking plan that is right for you.
- If you are a heavy drinker, reduce your drinking to one drink a day.
- If you feel you cannot control your drinking, speak with your doctor about best options to control your drinking.
- If you are inactive, begin walking 10 minutes a day. Work your way up to 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.
- If you are overweight, speak with your doctor or a nutritionist and choose a healthy eating plan.

Dementia Risk Factors

 Traumatic Brain Injury

 Hearing Loss

 High Blood Pressure

 Type 2 Diabetes

 Depression

 Active Smoking

 Alcohol Use Disorder

 Heavy Drinking

 Physically Inactive

 Obesity