



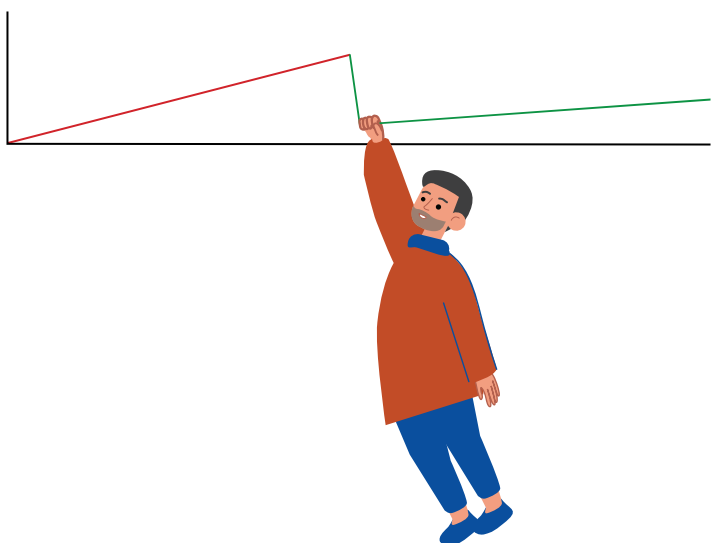
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Dementia prevention

How can I reduce my risk?





Preventing dementia

→ Which dementia risk factors can be influenced?

Although we cannot completely protect ourselves from developing dementia, a healthy lifestyle and treatment of health problems can reduce the risk.

The Lancet Commission 2024 on dementia prevention is a comprehensive scientific analysis that identifies 14 modifiable risk factors and estimates that targeting these factors could prevent or delay up to 45% of all dementia cases worldwide.*

Modifiable risk factors:

Childhood/Youth	Middle age	Later phase of life
· Less education (5%)	· Hearing loss (7%) · High LDL cholesterol (7%) · Depression (3%) · Traumatic brain injury (3%) · Physical inactivity (2%) · Smoking (2%) · Hypertension (2%) · Diabetes (2%) · Excessive alcohol (1%) · Obesity (1%)	· Social isolation (5%) · Air pollution (3%) · Visual loss (2%)

*Dementia prevention, intervention, and care: 2024 report of the Lancet standing Commission, Livingston et al., 2024, The Lancet, Volume 404, Issue 10452, 572 - 628

→ Which risk factors cannot be influenced?

Age is the most significant risk factor. Although dementia is not part of the normal ageing process, the risk of developing the disease increases with age.

Genetic risk factors cannot be influenced either. However, only about 7% of all dementia cases are caused by genetic factors, and less than 5% of all Alzheimer's cases are clearly hereditary.

Another risk factor is gender. Women are more likely to develop dementia than men. This cannot be attributed solely to women's higher life expectancy, but is also related to hormonal, genetic, and social factors, among others.

→ What exactly can I do to reduce my risk?

• **Recognize and treat hearing impairment**

Hearing impairment is widespread among older people, but often goes unnoticed for a long time due to its gradual progression.

Early detection is possible through simple diagnostic tests or the use of appropriate questionnaires. Please consult an ENT doctor for this. You can find an online hearing test, for example, at digidem-bayern.de (in German and English).

• **Monitor cholesterol levels**

Elevated LDL cholesterol levels promote the formation of harmful protein deposits, known as amyloid plaques, which occur in the brain in Alzheimer's disease. Taking cholesterol-lowering medication can bring cholesterol levels back to normal. This significantly reduces the risk of dementia. In the case of elevated LDL cholesterol levels, treatment should ideally begin in middle age.

• **Avoid high blood pressure**

From the age of 40, systolic blood pressure should be 130 mmHg or less. If your blood pressure is higher, ask your doctor for advice. If necessary, high blood pressure can be lowered with medication.

- **Maintain social contacts**

Meeting family, friends, and acquaintances, being socially active, and interacting with others is good for the “grey matter” and has a positive effect on the mind and spirit. Socially active people are also less likely to suffer from depression (a risk factor for dementia).

Services in Luxembourg:

- clubaktivplus.lu
- gero.lu
- Iris Service of the Luxembourg Red Cross – Service for people who feel lonely or isolated
- benevolat.lu



- **Treat visual loss**

People whose eyesight deteriorates in old age have a higher risk of developing dementia.

Similar to hearing loss, declining vision can cause people to withdraw and be less socially active, among other things – a known risk factor.

It is therefore recommended that impaired vision should be treated.

- **Avoid smoking**

People who smoke have a higher risk of developing dementia – but also a higher risk of dying before they can even develop dementia.

Quitting smoking reduces both risks.

Help for quitting smoking:

- maviesanstabac.lu
- Fondation Cancer / cancer.lu
- Tobacco cessation services at local hospitals

- **Regular physical activity**

Regular exercise promotes well-being and reduces the risk of developing dementia. It stimulates blood flow to the brain and promotes the formation of new cells and connections. Physical activity also protects against cardiovascular disease and depression, which are additional risk factors for dementia.

Depending on the person's physical condition and ability, moderate endurance training (e.g., brisk walking, cycling), strength training, and balance as well as coordination exercises may be beneficial.

Any movement is better than none - even light, regular activity can have positive effects, even if you have been inactive up to now (e.g., taking the stairs, walking short distances, standing up while talking on the phone, etc.).

Services in Luxembourg:

- municipalities (fit & fun, Sport pour tous, sport clubs,...)
- clubaktivplus.lu
- zithaaktiv.lu



- **Prevent and treat depression**

Approximately one in four people over the age of 65 suffers from a mental illness, particularly depression. People are often reluctant to see a doctor when they are suffering emotionally. For many, mental illnesses are not considered as serious as physical ones. In most cases, depression is highly treatable, and no one should hesitate to seek support.

What can help?

- Social contacts & physical activity
- Treatment methods:
Psychotherapy, physical activity, and medication if needed
- Professional help:
Family doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist, or geriatrician
- Ligne Santé Mentale
- SOS Détresse: 454545.lu

- **Intellectual challenge at any age**

People who receive a high-quality education in childhood and adolescence and who remain mentally active in their careers and leisure time have a lower risk of developing dementia later in life. Even in old age, our brains are capable of change. Neuroplasticity refers to the brain's ability to constantly change through new experiences and learning processes, which is why it is so important to regularly challenge it with new things in order to strengthen neural connections and maintain or improve mental abilities.

Some ideas:

- Try something new, for example, a foreign language, a new hobby, singing, playing music, or dancing
- Social interactions
- Cognitive tasks (not just Sudoku), challenging games (Scrabble, chess, etc.)
- Read newspapers, books every day - even in other languages



<i>I'm already doing this</i>	<i>I could improve this</i>
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What can I do?

Tick the boxes.

Recognise and treat hearing impairment

Monitor cholesterol levels

Avoid high blood pressure

Maintain social contacts

Treat visual loss

Avoid smoking

Regular physical activity

Healthy diet

Prevent and treat depression

Intellectual challenge at any age

→ When should I start preventing dementia?

It is never too early or too late to start preventing dementia, even if the first symptoms have already appeared.

By staying mentally, physically, and socially active and addressing health issues, we can positively influence our brain health throughout our lives.

→ What if dementia has already been diagnosed?

An active lifestyle remains important for people with dementia, as it helps to maintain functionality, quality of life, and well-being for as long as possible.

You can find more information under the section "Prävention" (in German & French):
<https://demenz.lu/de/praevention/>



Do you have questions about forgetfulness or dementia? We are here for you!

Our team offers free counselling with or
without an appointment.

Get in touch with us:

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Info-Zenter
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Ministerium für Familie, Solidarität,
Zusammenleben und Unterbringung
von Flüchtlingen