



How to Reduce Your Risk of Alzheimer's Disease



Contributor: [Gad A. Marshall, MD](#)

Gad A. Marshall, MD, Associate Medical Director of Clinical Trials, Center for Alzheimer Research and Treatment at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH).

Change behavior, change your brain

Lifestyle modifications have been shown to reduce the development of Alzheimer's disease, or slow the progression of symptoms, such as [mild cognitive impairment](#).

"Physical exercise and a healthy diet are, not surprisingly, two things we recommend frequently as doctors," says [Gad A. Marshall, MD](#), Associate Medical Director of Clinical Trials, [Center for Alzheimer Research and Treatment](#) at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH).

Exercise often, and maintain a healthy diet

[Aerobic exercise](#) is the most effective way to slow the decline of cognition, says Dr. Marshall. He recommends exercising three-to-four times a week for at least 30 minutes a session ([how to design exercise program](#)).

In terms of diet, the [Mediterranean diet](#) has shown positive outcomes. This diet consists of eating:

- More fish and chicken, less red meat
- Lots of fruit and vegetables
- Olive oil
- Nuts
- Complex grains

“What has been proven to reduce the risk of Alzheimer's is the Mediterranean diet *as a whole*, not the individual ingredients, or just eating healthfully,” says Dr. Marshall.

Want to [learn more](#) about eating a Mediterranean diet?

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Focus on heart health

To lower your risk of Alzheimer's, it's also important to control cardiovascular risk factors, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol. If you are a diabetic, it's important to manage your disease carefully.

“Making sure these risk factors are under control has yielded better outcomes in terms of reducing the rate of developing Alzheimer's symptoms,” says Dr. Marshall.

The relationship between poor sleep and Alzheimer's disease

Studies have show that individuals who sleep poorly may have a higher accumulation of [amyloid in their brain](#), which is associated with Alzheimer's disease and may, in fact, be causative.

Early findings suggest that getting a good night's sleep may have a protective effect on the brain.

For tips on how to sleep better, [watch this video](#) with [Stuart F. Quan](#), MD, Clinical Director of the Division of Sleep and Circadian Rhythm Disorders at BWH.

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Engage in mentally stimulating activities

Research focused on [engaging in mentally stimulating activities](#) to help reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease is currently inconclusive.

Dr. Marshall notes that studies on “brain-training” computer programs have not clearly shown a preservative effect on cognition in healthy individuals.

“On the other hand, for those with early stages of cognitive decline, individualized training can help people work around particular cognitive issues,” says Dr. Marshall.

Participate in clinical trials

The Center for Alzheimer's Research and Treatment (CART) at BWH conducts studies to learn about various risk factors for Alzheimer's disease.

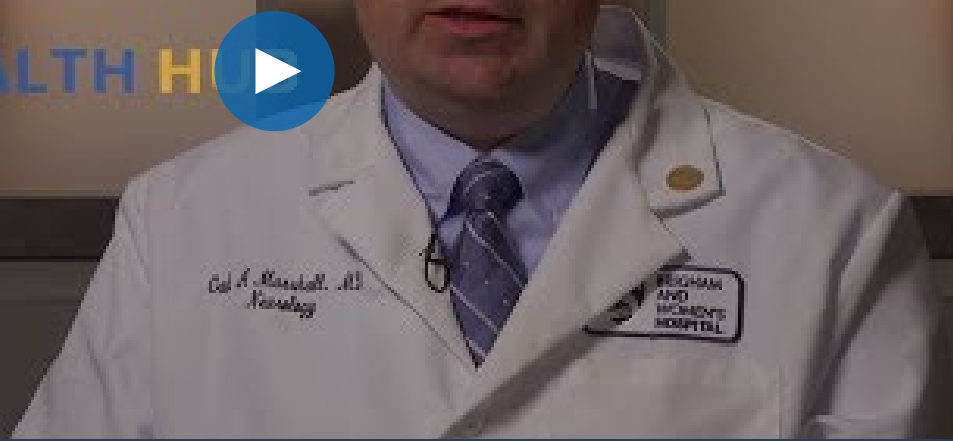
The Center also runs treatment studies that examine the use of interventions that may prevent Alzheimer's or treat existing symptoms. [Learn more or enroll in a clinical trial.](#)

For general information and resources on Alzheimer's disease, [visit CART's resources hub.](#)

- By Dustin G.



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In this video, Gad A. Marshall, MD, Associate Medical Director of Clinical Trials in the Memory Disorders Unit at BWH, discusses steps you can take to reduce your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

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