

Depression and Aging

Geriatric Depression: Risk Factors

History of Depression

Functional Disability

Illness

Family Criticism (Real or Perceived)

Difficulty Performing Physical Activities

Know the signs, get help if needed. Learn more @DeodedScience.com

As mentioned in the introduction, as we age more things can influence the older adult's mental state and influence the onset of depression. Chronic illness and disability are two major causes of this in the older adult. Sometimes the older adult must learn to strategize and learn how to modify what they do rather than give up on healthy activities.

It should be noted that depression can easily be mistaken for dementia in older adults.

Symptoms of Depression in the Older Adult

1. Increased isolation. There is a loss of interest in going out and socializing.
2. Constant feeling of tiredness and fatigue. They constantly feel low on energy which feeds their desire not to go out and socialize.
3. Disruptive sleep. This contributes to their feeling of tiredness.
4. Change in appetite. This can mean a loss of appetite or a feeling of always wanting to eat to ease their emotional discomfort.
5. Feeling more emotionally unsettled. This can take the form of feeling more nervous, anxious and hesitant to make decisive decisions.
6. Loss of interest in pleasure. This means always seeing the glass as half empty rather than half full.

Ways of Managing Depression

1. Stay physically active. Exercise is good for the brain because it increases serotonin levels, (the "feel good" chemical in your brain).
2. Spend time with family and friends. Volunteer in your community. Utilize social media to stay connected.
3. Be aware of side effects of medications. Certain medications can have significant mood altering effects.
4. Stay mentally active. Learn new skills that challenge you physically and mentally.
5. Manage your diet. Healthy foods raise serotonin levels.



Supplements - on the advice of your doctor, supplements can increase your serotonin levels via the amino acid tryptophan. Serotonin is synthesized from tryptophan.

Diet - Serotonin isn't found in foods, but the amino acid tryptophan is. Foods high in protein (eggs, cheese, tofu, salmon, nuts and seeds, turkey) tend to contain large amounts of this amino acid. You need to include carbohydrates (rice, oatmeal, whole grain breads, potatoes) with these high protein foods because carbohydrates cause the body to release more insulin, which promotes tryptophan absorption.

6. Develop and maintain a positive attitude.

1. Learn from someone who is having a positive aging experience.

2. Establish meaningful goals. Setting goals is important but equally important is strategizing and establishing action plans to accomplish them. It is important to develop a sense of purpose.

3. Have fun. Find fun in everything you do.



Dementia and Alzheimer's: It is Time to Fight Back

The following are results from research papers that were presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference held in Toronto in July 2016.

New research findings are showing how a specific type of brain exercise and a rich mental life can resist against the onset of dementia.

Exercising the Brain

In a randomized controlled experiment called the ACTIVE study it was shown for the first time that a particular form of "brain training" may give a level of protection from dementia. This is important because the proliferation of computer-based "brain games" that claim effectiveness against cognitive decline has not been supported by the scientific literature.

As part of the ACTIVE study 700 healthy participants averaging 74 years of age received 10 hours of training on a computer task. Some received additional training one to three years later. The task, which is marketed

commercially as **BrainHQ** and available on the App Store, requires participants to attend to



the icon of a vehicle at the centre of the screen while also responding to various objects that pop up on the periphery of the screen.

After 10 years, 33% fewer participants developed dementia compared to a control group who received no training. Among those who received additional training 48% fewer developed dementia. In contrast, other groups in the ACTIVE study that received other forms of cognitive training related to memory and reasoning skills showed no increased resilience to

The Benefits of a Good Diet and a Rich Mental and Social Life

Diet

Diet is a known risk factor for Dementia. Research out of Baycrest Health Sciences tracked 351 independently living older adults over a three year period. The study found that those who adhered to a typical "Western" diet that included processed meat, white bread, potatoes and pre-packaged foods and sweets were more likely to experience cognitive decline. Interestingly, the negative impact of diet did not show up for those subjects whose backgrounds included three distinct indicators: a high level of education, a complex occupation and a significant amount of social engagement.

Rich Mental and Social Life

Matthew Parrott, researcher in Neuroscience with Baycrest Health Science states "Your whole lifetime of mental experience is going to change the way your brain is wired up... and later life experiences, specifically socially rich leisure activities can contribute to cognitive resilience after retirement."

A study from the University of Wisconsin found that even among people with complex jobs, those that primarily worked with people rather than data or things were better able to cope with the damage to brain tissue associated with dementia and Alzheimer's.

Summary

Alzheimer's Association's "10 Ways to Love your Brain"

1. Exercise
2. Read and continue your education
3. Don't smoke
4. Reduce risk factors for heart disease: obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes
5. Avoid contact sports and wear a helmet when riding a bike and skiing etc.
6. Eat right
7. Sleep well
8. Stay positive and seek treatment for symptoms of depression
9. Stay socially engaged
10. Challenge yourself. Set goals to achieve new goals

Continual to be Active Physically and Mentally