# How to lower the risk of getting dementia

## The condition isn't an inevitable part of ageing and there are several things you can do to reduce the chance of developing it. By

Llanelli Star · 18 Feb 2026 · 1 · CAMILLA FOSTER

NEW research suggests that the menopause is linked to a loss of grey matter in the brain, which may help explain why women are more likely to suffer dementia than men.




Experts from the University of Cambridge discovered the link after carrying out a study on 124,780 women to examine the effects of menopause on the brain and whether hormone replacement therapy (HRT) plays a role in preventing cognitive decline.

In light of the findings, Emma Taylor, information services manager at Alzheimer's Research UK, tells us if there is anything we can all do to lower our risk of dementia.

Is dementia preventable?

"Research [from the Lancet Commission] suggests that up to 45% of dementia cases worldwide could be prevented or delayed through lifestyle changes and by removing 14 risk factors that we might be able to influence," says Emma.

What risk factors can't we control?

Age is widely considered the biggest risk factor for dementia, and is something we are unfortunately unable to control.

"The older we are, the more likely we are to develop a disease that causes dementia, like Alzheimer's," says Emma. "One of the main reasons why age is such a big factor is that the diseases that cause dementia tend to take a long time to develop. In addition, our bodies naturally become a bit more vulnerable to damage as we age."

Specific genes can also play a role.

"Although only around 1% of dementia cases are directly inherited, some people do have risk genes, such as APOE4, which can increase their risk of developing dementia, but doesn't necessarily guarantee that we will get it," explains Emma.

It's really important to get your blood pressure or your cholesterol checked Emma Taylor from Alzheimer's Research UK

What factors can we control?

“The ‘Think Brain Health’ campaign at Alzheimer’s Research UK breaks brain healthy behaviours, that we can all do, down into three pillars,” says Emma.
“The first pillar is all about loving your heart, because what’s good for your heart is also good for your brain. The next pillar is all about staying sharp and the third pillar is about keeping connected.”
Here are some ways to reduce your risk of dementia which align with these three pillars...
Stay connected:
“Research suggests that social isolation is linked to an increased risk of dementia,” says Emma.
“Depression, in particular, is a recognised risk factor for dementia, so keeping connected to the people around us is a really good way to give back to our brain. “Have regular catch-ups with friends and family or join a club that interests you, such as a dance class, a reading club or a puzzle club.”
Get your eyesight checked:
“Getting your eyesight checked is a really important part of looking after your brain health,” says Emma.
“It’s crucial to have regular eyesight tests because our eyes and our brains are very closely connected.”
In particular, visual impairment caused by cataracts and diabetic retinopathy is associated with an increased risk of dementia, according to Alzheimer’s Research UK.
Managing long-term health conditions:
“Conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes can all damage the blood vessels, particularly in the brain,” Emma explains.
“When that happens, less oxygen and nutrients are able to supply our brain cells with what they need to function normally.
“That can make it harder for our brain to fight any damage that may build up over time. So, it’s really important to get your blood pressure or your cholesterol checked by your GP or at a pharmacies.
“If you are diagnosed with high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes, it’s important to make sure that you’re proactively taking steps to manage those conditions.”
Limit alcohol consumption to 14 units per week:
“Regularly drinking too much alcohol, especially over a long period of time, is toxic to brain cells and causes them to die,” says Emma. “Drinking lots of alcohol can also make it harder for our bodies to absorb and store vitamin B1, and when we don’t have enough our brains can’t produce the energy that they need to work properly. “So, it’s recommended to drink no more than the current NICE guidelines which is 14 units per week.”
Quit smoking: “Smoking is linked to a lot of different medical conditions, including heart disease, high cholesterol and high blood pressure,” says Emma.
“What’s good for your heart is good for your brain, therefore these effects mean that smoking increases your risk of dementia.
“Also, when we smoke, our blood vessels become coated in a sticky substance that causes fatty lumps to build up and the blood vessels to become narrower and get weaker.
“This means that less blood can get to every part of our body, including our brain.

“There’s also carbon monoxide in smoke from cigarettes, which can replace oxygen in our blood.
“That also means that the brain cells don’t get as much oxygen, which causes damage over time,
because they’re not able to carry out their functions normally.”
Maintain a healthy weight: Research has found that obesity between the ages of 35-65 could increase dementia risk by three times (30%), according to Alzheimer’s Research UK. “Being obese can often put a strain on our heart, blood vessels and internal brain,” says Emma. “It can increase our risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease and stroke and inflammation, which can have a significant impact on our brain health.”