SMARTS:
Steps to a Healthier Brain for Women

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF Lifestyle Medicine

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S — SLEEP

Fact: Regular sleep schedules decrease the risk of dementia[3] as the brain uses our sleep cycles to process and clean the brain every night.[4]

TIP: Set a regular bedtime and wake up time with less than an hour change through the week. Click here for more sleep tips.

M — MOVE

Fact: Movement in all forms decreases the risk of dementia and has been shown to help the brain grow. A wide variety of activities may be just as important as the frequency of activity.

TIP: Moderate-intensity exercise is great [6], but every time you walk with your loved ones, dance to your favorite song, or just stand up and stretch you are helping your brain [7]. Don't forget resistance training is not only good for your muscles and bones but also maintains your brain.[8–10]

A — AVOID RISKY SUBSTANCES

Fact: Women are more likely than men to take sleeping pills[11], and pills not only mask the causes of insomnia, but they may also increase your lifetime risk of dementia.[12]

TIP: The American College of Physicians recommends Cognitive Behavioral therapy as the first line for insomnia.[13] CBT-i Coach is a free app from the VA. Download it here.

R — RELAX

Fact: A regular meditation practice changes your activation of brain networks and may even change the structure of the brain itself.[14]

TIP: There are many approaches to mindfulness. Here are five free tools from the US Surgeon General

T — THERAPEUTIC NUTRITION

Fact: Eating just 1.3 servings of green leafy vegetables a day slowed the progression of cognitive decline by the equivalent of 11 years.[15]

TIP: The National Institute on Aging has compiled a wide variety of resources on foods that can help preserve and improve brain health. Click here to learn more.

S — SOCIAL CONNECTION

Fact: Regular social contact significantly decreases the risk of dementia [16], [17]and hearing loss is a common cause of social isolation for older women.[18]

TIP: To connect to tools to help understand your risk of and practical tools to decrease social isolation, click here. Both AARP and United Health Care offer free hearing tests that can be done at home. To learn more about hearing loss see this information from the National Institute on Aging.

Background Facts

- Dementia is a loss of brain function that affects your memory, thinking, mood and behavior.
- Globally, 50 million people live with dementia, and this number is projected to triple to 152 million by 2050. [1]
- Women have nearly twice the lifetime risk of developing dementia than men. [2]
- Changes at any age make a difference, and lifestyle changes cut your risk by 40% [1]



REFERENCES

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