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AMERICANS BELIEVE THEY HAVE THE POWER TO REDUCE THEIR RISK OF COGNITIVE DECLINE BUT DON'T KNOW HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

A recent survey from Reader's Digest and the Alzheimer's Association shines new light on the way people think about their brain health and lifestyle choices

CHICAGO, June 15, 2015 – Is your brain important to you? Do you know how to keep it healthy? According to a recent survey conducted by *Reader's Digest* in partnership with the Alzheimer's Association, 91 percent of people believe they can reduce their risk of cognitive decline, but they have misconceptions about ways to keep their brains healthy.

Reader's Digest and the Alzheimer's Association partnered to survey approximately 1,600 people in May 2015 about their brain health and their knowledge of how lifestyle habits affect cognitive decline and dementia. While the brain is the command center of the body and deserves as much attention as the heart and other vital organs, only 33 percent of people surveyed see their brain as important to them from a health perspective. Further, only 21 percent of people rank their brain as the area of health they focus on when making healthy lifestyle choices.

“It's time to reset the way we think about our brain health, as it is essential for overall body health,” said Angela Geiger, Chief Strategy Officer, Alzheimer's Association. “The evidence that everyday lifestyle choices can make a positive impact on brain health is something that cannot be ignored.”

When it comes to nutrition, only five percent of people surveyed consider their brain when trying to eat healthy, even though a healthy and balanced diet that is lower in fat and higher in vegetables and fruit can help reduce the risk of cognitive decline. Only 62 percent of people realize that smoking affects their risk of cognitive decline. While studies show that smoking increases risk of cognitive decline, quitting reduces risk to levels comparable to those who have not smoked.

“We know our readers care about their health and have expressed growing interest in how to take care of their brains,” said Liz Vaccariello, Editor-in-Chief of *Reader's Digest*. “The evidence is strong: healthy habits known to combat cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes may also reduce the risk of cognitive decline. It's never too late or too early to start thinking about your brain's health.”

Additional key survey findings include:

- Only 59 percent of people know that taking a class is a way to protect your brain from cognitive decline. One of the areas with the most evidence for reducing risk of cognitive decline and dementia is more years of formal education.
- As many as 69 percent of survey respondents incorrectly believe you can reduce your risk of cognitive decline by eating one or two of the right “super foods.” Research on diet and cognitive function is limited, but certain diets, including [Mediterranean](#) and [Mediterranean-DASH](#) (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension), may contribute to risk reduction.
- Sixty percent of survey respondents incorrectly believe that if they buy the right puzzle, game or app, they can reduce their risk of cognitive decline. However, there is no single “brain game” that is proven to reduce the risk of cognitive decline. Evidence shows that consistently engaging in activities that involve learning new skills, solving problems, or that stretch the mind strategically are ways to potentially reduce risk of cognitive decline.

June is Alzheimer’s and Brain Awareness Month. To further demonstrate the need to promote awareness and understanding around which lifestyle choices can positively promote brain health, the Alzheimer’s Association and its experts recently developed [10 Ways to Love Your Brain](#), tips that may reduce the risk of cognitive decline. Cognitive decline is a deterioration in memory or cognition. To see the list, visit alz.org/10ways.

For more information and results from this important survey, read the latest article on www.RD.com. In the fall, *Reader’s Digest* will publish a book about dementia and Alzheimer’s disease based on the latest studies.

In addition to recommending these healthy habits, the Alzheimer’s Association is asking the community to come together and help fight Alzheimer’s disease especially during Alzheimer’s & Brain Awareness Month:

- Take the Purple Pledge at alz.org.
- Participate in [The Longest Day](#)[®], a sunrise-to-sunset event to honor those facing Alzheimer’s disease with strength, passion and endurance on Sunday, June 21. Visit alz.org today to start a team to raise funds and awareness.
- Join the Alzheimer’s Association in wearing purple on The Longest Day and share photos of yourself, family, friends and co-workers wearing purple via [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), Instagram, [Pinterest](#), YouTube, etc. using the hashtags #ENDALZ and #GoPurple.

About the survey

Reader’s Digest recently partnered with the Alzheimer’s Association to survey approximately 1,600 people during the month of May 2015. The online survey that was conducted asked questions and sought participants’ thoughts about brain health and knowledge of how lifestyle habits could affect cognitive decline and dementia.

About Reader’s Digest

Reader’s Digest simplifies and enriches consumers’ lives by discovering and expertly selecting the most interesting ideas, stories, experiences and products in health, home, family, food, finance and humor. Recognized by 99% of American adults, *Reader’s Digest* is available in

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About the Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. It is the largest nonprofit funder of Alzheimer's research. The Association's mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. Its vision is a world without Alzheimer's. Visit alz.org or call 800.272.3900.

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