



**Keeping your mind sharp**

**Brain health and African-Americans**

alzheimer's  association®



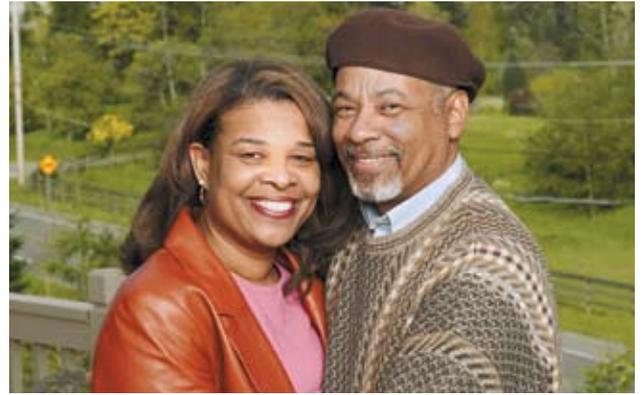
Did you know?

## **African-Americans may be at higher risk for Alzheimer's**

- African-Americans have a higher risk for diabetes,\* a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia
- High blood pressure is more common among African-Americans\*
- A person with high blood pressure or high cholesterol may be more likely to develop Alzheimer's
- African-Americans may have a higher rate of vascular dementia\*

\*Compared to Caucasian Americans

You can do many things to keep your brain healthier as you age. These steps may also reduce your risk for Alzheimer's and other types of dementia.



Make the connection

## **Your heart and your brain**

Your heart works hard. So does your brain. And what's good for your heart is good for your brain.

Every heartbeat pumps about one-fifth of your blood to your brain. Billions of brain cells need the food and oxygen carried by your blood to think, solve problems and remember.

Conditions that damage your heart and blood vessels interfere with the brain's vital supply lines.

Many risk factors for heart disease also threaten brain health:

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes (high blood sugar)
- Being overweight
- Lack of exercise

African-Americans have a higher risk for diabetes, high blood pressure and other risk factors. Work with your doctor to watch out for these conditions and get them under control.



## Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia

Two serious brain disorders linked to heart risk factors are:

- Alzheimer's (*AHLZ-high-merz*)
- Vascular dementia

### Alzheimer's disease

Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia (*dih-MEN-shuh*), a group of brain disorders that causes confusion and problems with memory, judgment and reasoning. Dementia makes it increasingly difficult to do everyday tasks.

Alzheimer's is:

- *Not* a normal part of growing older
- *Not* a mental illness

In Alzheimer's, tiny abnormal deposits build up in the brain. These deposits may be more likely to form when diseases affecting the brain's blood vessels are also present.

### Vascular dementia

*Also known as stroke-related dementia*

This disorder is caused by strokes or other conditions that directly affect the brain's blood supply.

Because African-Americans are more likely to have vascular (blood vessel) disease, they may also be more likely to get vascular dementia.

### Control your risks

African-Americans may have a higher risk for Alzheimer's disease because of factors that we cannot control like age and family history.

But there are other risk factors we *can* control if we take steps every day to keep our brains healthier as we age.

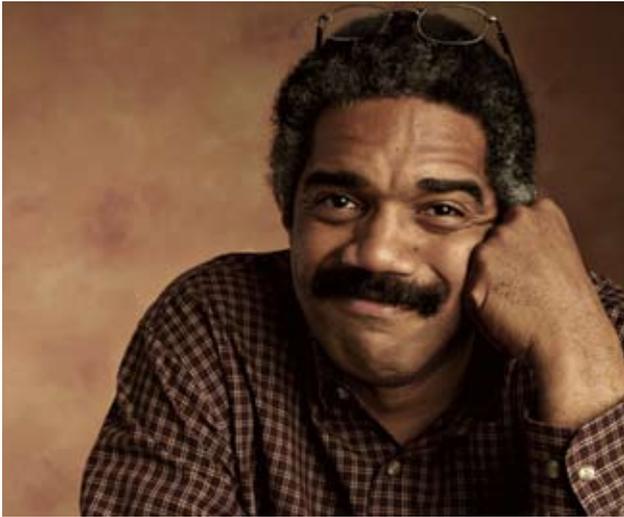
### Be heart-smart – watch your numbers

- Blood pressure
- Blood sugar
- Body weight
- Cholesterol

### Make brain-healthy lifestyle choices

- Stay mentally active
- Remain socially involved
- Stay physically active
- Adopt a brain-healthy diet

📖 Learn more: [www.maintainyourbrain.com](http://www.maintainyourbrain.com)



Memory loss that disrupts everyday life is not normal aging. It may be a symptom of dementia. The most common cause of dementia is Alzheimer's disease.

## Is it Alzheimer's?

### 10 signs you should know<sup>®</sup>

1. Memory loss
2. Difficulty doing familiar tasks
3. Problems with talking or writing
4. Confusion about time and place
5. Loss of judgment
6. Problems with abstract thinking
7. Misplacing things
8. Changes in mood or behavior
9. Changes in personality
10. Loss of motivation

## Why sooner is better

If you're having major memory problems, see a doctor to find the cause. Early diagnosis increases your opportunity to receive treatments and make decisions about the future.

## Telling fact from fiction

Ideas about what might cause Alzheimer's have been around for a long time. It is important to know that Alzheimer's is *not* caused by:



- Aluminum cans, pots or pans
- Artificial sweeteners
- A hex or a curse
- Too much worrying or thinking

## You can make a difference

### Be aware

Learn more about Alzheimer's and how you can reduce your risk.

### See your doctor

Find out what risk factors you need to get under control today.

### Consider research

Fewer African-Americans take part in Alzheimer research. Contact the Alzheimer's Association to find out more about volunteering for a study.

### Get involved

Visit the Alzheimer's Association nearest you or contact us 24/7 at:

**1.800.272.3900**

**[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)**

## Your numbers count

### Blood pressure

Desirable blood pressure is less than 120/80

### Blood sugar

Desirable fasting blood sugar is less than 100 mg/dL

### Body weight

Keep your body weight in the recommended range

### Cholesterol

Desirable cholesterol is less than 200 mg/dL

Make brain-healthy choices

## Maintain Your Brain®

### **1. Stay mentally active**

Stimulating activities strengthen brain cells and the connections between them

### **2. Remain socially involved**

It not only makes physical and mental activity more fun, it reduces stress

### **3. Stay physically active**

Exercise keeps good blood flow to the brain and encourages new brain cells to develop

### **4. Adopt a brain-healthy diet**

A low fat, low cholesterol diet is best

📄 Learn more: [www.maintainyourbrain.com](http://www.maintainyourbrain.com)

The Alzheimer's Association, the world leader in Alzheimer research, care and support, is dedicated to finding prevention methods, treatments and an eventual cure for Alzheimer's.

For reliable information and support,  
contact the Alzheimer's Association:

**[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)**

**1.800.272.3900**

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