More than 5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer’s, and many more are at risk of developing it or another dementia.

- An estimated 10-20% of individuals aged 65 and older have mild cognitive impairment (MCI) — a stage that precedes dementia. Studies indicate that roughly one-third of them will develop dementia within 5 years.

- One in 9 Americans aged 45 and older have subjective cognitive decline (SCD) — self-reported confusion or memory loss that is happening more often or is getting worse. SCD is an early warning sign of possible future dementia.

- By 2050, the number of older adults with Alzheimer’s is projected to total nearly 14 million.

While there is no treatment that changes the underlying course of the disease, there may be ways to reduce risk.

- Moderate and severe traumatic brain injury increases the risk of developing certain forms of dementia.

- Regular physical activity and management of certain cardiovascular risk factors — mid-life hypertension, diabetes, smoking, and mid-life obesity — can reduce the risk of cognitive decline and may reduce the risk of dementia.

- In addition, a healthy diet and lifelong learning/cognitive training may also reduce the risk of cognitive decline.

What Can Public Health Do?

- Use the best available evidence to build public knowledge about cognitive health across the life course.

- Educating the public about brain health, cognitive aging, and healthy lifestyle changes that should be discussed with a health care professional.

- Promoting the use of effective interventions and best practices to promote brain health.

- Educating public health and health care professionals about sources of reliable information on brain health.

- Educating health care professionals about the importance of treating co-morbidities, especially those that are risk factors for cognitive decline.

For more information, visit: [alz.org/publichealth](http://alz.org/publichealth).
Addressing possible risk factors by the medical and public health communities may improve cognitive health.

- Several retrospective studies have found declining rates of dementia prevalence or incidence in some population cohorts since the 1970s.
- Some of these studies have noted that over the same period, study participants had substantial improvements in management of cardiovascular risk factors and declines in the rates of smoking, heart disease, and stroke.
- A recent randomized controlled trial found that aggressive control of blood pressure significantly reduced the risk of developing MCI.
- In total, assuming a causal link between modifiable risk factors and Alzheimer’s, studies estimate that about one-third of all cases of Alzheimer’s can be attributable to those risk factors.

### Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map

The Healthy Brain Initiative is a joint public-private collaboration led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that seeks to fully integrate cognitive health into public health policies, programs, and actions. As part of this collaboration, the Alzheimer’s Association and the CDC’s Alzheimer’s Disease + Healthy Aging Program have developed the third in a series of road maps — the Healthy Brain Initiative State and Local Public Health Partnerships to Address Dementia: The 2018-2023 Road Map.

The Road Map serves as a guide to help state and local public health agencies address the future impact of dementia, particularly among the most vulnerable populations. It contains 25 actions for public health to undertake. These actions are aligned with the Essential Services of Public Health and encourage cross-sector partnerships, data-informed action, and increased attention to eliminating disparities.

For more information, please visit: alz.org/publichealth.

### Prevalence of Dementia Risk Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factor</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypertension*</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking*</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obesity*</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically Inactive</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Prevalence rates correspond to the relevant ages of risk for each possible risk factor.

However, these gains may evaporate in the future.

- With the growth in the rates of diabetes and obesity in the United States, any improvement in dementia prevalence and incidence rates could be erased in the future.
- Additionally, the prevalence of hypertension remains high — affecting one-third of U.S. adults — and on average, only about half of adults with hypertension have their condition controlled.
- The consequence is that addressing possible risk factors for cognitive decline and dementia may be necessary not only to reduce the occurrence of dementia in the population but just to prevent the current projections from getting worse.