

Woman's Day

LIVE WELL EVERY DAY™

Last-Minute Christmas Ideas

★ Cool Stocking Stuffers ★ Festive
Recipes ★ Dazzling Decorations

Delicious Dinners

Clear the Clutter
for Good

52 Ways
to Be Healthier

JANUARY 1, 2008

womansday.com

100's of Recipes & Useful Tips

alzheimer's disease

MYTH You can't do anything to reduce your risk.

Reality It's true that age is the biggest risk factor, and you can't stop the clock, but you can potentially reduce your odds by exercising regularly, staying socially connected, and continuing to use your mind and learn new things as you age. Eating a heart-healthy diet that's low in fat and cholesterol and rich in produce and omega-3 fatty acids may also help. What's good for your heart also keeps brain blood vessels and arteries healthy, so they can deliver the nutrients and oxygen your brain needs to function.

MYTH If my mom or dad had Alzheimer's, I'm going to get it, too.

Reality Only a few hundred families around the world carry certain genes that guarantee the development of Alzheimer's. If you have a family history of the disease, it's more likely that you carry another more common gene like ApoE, which raises your risk but does not ensure that you'll get it. A genetic test for ApoE is available, but experts don't recommend it because it doesn't definitively predict Alzheimer's or give you a clear indication of how great your risk is.

- More than 5 million Americans have the disease; most of them are over 65.
- Nearly 50 percent of the population will have Alzheimer's by age 85.
- There are four drugs on the market that slow the disease, but they only work in about 50 percent of patients; 35 new ones are now being tested.

did you know?

MYTH If I start misplacing my keys and wallet frequently, I'm doomed.

Reality It's normal to become a little forgetful as you age. If you have Alzheimer's, you'll make major mistakes, such as reintroducing yourself to someone you just met a minute ago or getting lost in your neighborhood. That's because Alzheimer's develops when protein deposits form inside and between the brain's nerve cells, clogging the brain's circuitry, robbing brain tissue of blood and oxygen, and causing nerve cells to die. This damage is too small to be detected with CT scans or MRIs, and a firm diagnosis of the disease can't be confirmed until after death, during an autopsy. But a skilled neurologist should be able to diagnose it with 90 percent certainty through a neurological and physical exam.

For more information, visit the Alzheimer's Association website at alz.org

"We're on the cusp of major breakthroughs. In three to four years, we may have a treatment for Alzheimer's that will slow down the progression of the disease dramatically."

Maria C. Carrillo, Ph.D., director of medical and scientific relations at the Alzheimer's Association in Chicago