

The heart, of course, pumps blood through the circulatory system and to the brain. In fact, the brain receives more than one-sixth of the cardiac output from the heart, as well as some 25 percent of the glucose and 20 percent of oxygen in the body's blood. So, you can see, the brain is a high priority for the heart. Thank goodness! At this point, science does not tell us that Alzheimer's is preventable. Age and genetics are common predisposing factors. However, researchers are telling us that

minimizing cardiovascular risk factors will increase our chances of preserving mental function.

What we do know is this: inflammatory processes such as chronic diseases set up a harmful immune response, which predisposes us to developing cardiovascular disease. Factors that can exacerbate this immune response include cigarette smoking, periodontal disease, high sugar diet, lack of physical exercise, obesity and stress.

So, in brief, certain strategies can address those factors. Exercise is a must-do, not a "might do" activity. Current recommendations are at least 150 minutes weekly of moderate physical activity (walking, swimming, and other various modalities). This might be three 50-minute periods during the week, or other combinations. Discover ways to manage stress. Exercise activities can actually improve mood and decrease stress. You might need to identify those situations that precipitate stress for you, and modify those situations. One article I read recommended cutting out cable news ! Diet recommendations include daily multiple servings of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes. Minimize red meat, processed meats and high sugar foods and drinks. Incorporate salmon and other omega 3 rich foods; use vegetable oils, e.g., olive oil. Also, avoid foods with high sodium content. Smoking cessation is difficult, as we know, but there are many programs and regimens that have been developed to help. Of course, a side-bar is to maintain a healthy blood pressure: readings below 130/80 are currently recommended, which is lower than previous recommendations.

There are lots of research projects to watch for added information, including new chemical markers to monitor, etc. What I've tried to do here is just point out the double value of following heart-healthy recommendations. Websites such as Web MD ([www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)) and the Mayo Clinic ([www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org)) can also be sources of additional and current information. Wishing us all success in maintaining body and mind.