

## BRAIN HEALTH RISKS

*Genetic risks to brain health are inherited, but the lifestyle and environmental factors you control may be changed to help overcome some of these risks and help maintain brain health.*

### Accidents

**THE RISK:** As we get older, the risk of falls and other accidents that can cause brain injury increases.

**REDUCE IT:** Exercise to improve balance, wear safety belts and helmets, get an eye exam, make sure your home is safe, and get enough sleep.

### Alcohol

**THE RISK:** Consuming alcohol can impair communication among brain cells and affect your balance, coordination, memory, and emotions.

**REDUCE IT:** Older adults should be especially careful because medicines can interact with alcohol. Either don't consume it or follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020, which describes "moderation" as up to one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men.

### Smoking and Related Risks

**THE RISK:** Smoking and other pollutants can affect your health, including your heart and lungs.

**REDUCE IT:** If you smoke, quit. Consider how to limit your exposure to air pollution from fires (including fireplaces and candles), vehicles, and industrial areas.

### Medicines

**THE RISK:** Some medicines—on their own or when combined with other things—can affect the way your brain functions.

**REDUCE IT:** Talk to your health care providers about all prescription and over-the-counter drugs you take. Follow instructions and take medicines safely.

### Health Conditions

**THE RISK:** Conditions like heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, and sleep problems can affect brain health.

**REDUCE IT:** Manage your cholesterol and blood pressure, exercise, eat healthily, and get recommended health screenings. If you smoke, quit. If you drink alcohol, limit consumption. Get enough sleep and seek help for sleep problems.

## WHERE TO BEGIN

*There are many things that can affect brain health. Start with one small step in the right direction:*

- Schedule a health screening or physical exam
- Review your medicines with your health care provider
- Add one daily serving of vegetables to your diet
- Start a food, activity, or health journal
- Find your community center's activity schedule
- If you are a Medicare beneficiary, schedule an Annual Wellness Visit

**REGULAR HEALTH SCREENINGS MAY IDENTIFY WAYS TO IMPROVE BRAIN HEALTH.**

