



Cognitive Decline in Seniors



Some signs and symptoms of cognitive decline include:

- Forgetting recent events, names of friends or family members, or dates/events
- Misplacing items more than usual
- Trouble finding the right words when speaking or understanding written or verbal information
- Easily distracted or quick to lose focus
- Difficulty with problem solving and decision making
- Difficulty completing complex tasks such as managing medications, cooking a meal, shopping, paying bills, and driving

○ Cleveland Clinic, 2023

Some factors that can increase the risk of cognitive decline:

- Chronic stress, anxiety, or depression
- Vitamin and nutrient deficiencies
- Sleep apnea/sleep disorders
- Urinary tract infection (UTI)
- Problems with the thyroid, kidney, or liver
- Conditions such as a brain tumor, stroke, traumatic brain injury, or blood clot
- Substance abuse disorder
- Taking certain medications
- Family history of dementia
- Over the age of 65
- Cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and obesity

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Ways in which you can reduce the effects of cognitive decline and help prevent cognitive decline in the future:

- Participate in regular exercise. Some examples of regular exercise include going for walks, chair yoga, and water aerobics. (Blondell, S., et al., 2014)
- Engage in leisure activities that you enjoy participating in. These can include anything from playing board games, knitting or crocheting, listening to music or dancing, reading, crafting, woodworking, or any other activity that you enjoy doing! (Fallahpour, M., et al., 2016)
- Play games that challenge strategy skills such as Mangala, Sodoku, and memory. You can engage in these activities by yourself or with a friend. (Dengiz, A., et al., 2023)
- Maintain a healthy diet including low carb, low cholesterol, and high HDL (most often found in the Mediterranean diet). (Govindugari, V., et al., 2023)

- Quitting specific bad habits such as smoking and consuming alcohol. (Govindugari, V., et al., 2023)
- Adopt better sleep habits including a more regular sleeping schedule (e. g. going to bed and waking up and the same times each day) and implementing a nighttime routine in order to stay asleep and help reduce waking throughout the night. (Govindugari, V., et al., 2023)

Resources

Blondell, S. J., Hammersley-Mather, R., & Lennert Veerman, J. (2014). Does physical activity prevent cognitive decline and dementia?: A systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. *BMC Public Health*, *14*(1), 1036–1061. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.neit.edu/10.1186/1471-2458-14-510>

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Fallahpour, M., Borell, L., Luborsky, M., & Nygård, L. (2016). Leisure-activity participation to prevent later-life cognitive decline: a systematic review. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *23*(3), 162–197. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.neit.edu/10.3109/11038128.2015.1102320>

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