

# Aging and Health Matters: Healthy Body, Healthy Brain

*[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Montrece Ransom] There's growing scientific evidence that healthy behaviors, which have been shown to prevent cancer, diabetes, and heart disease may also reduce your risk for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

A recent CDC study found that people with one or more chronic health conditions were more likely to report frequent problems with memory.

I'm in the studio today with Benjamin Olivari, a subject matter expert and ORISE Fellow with the Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program to discuss the study. Welcome Benjamin.

[Benjamin Olivari] Hi Montrece. Thanks for having me.

[Montrece Ransom] Benjamin, the study shows that people with chronic health conditions are more likely to report memory loss. Why is this study important?

[Benjamin Olivari] Brain health and physical health are especially important as we age. Our research shows that worsening or more frequent confusion or memory loss are more common in adults with chronic conditions. This can make it hard for people to live independently and do everyday tasks like cooking, cleaning, and keeping up medicines and doctor's appointments so that they can manage their chronic conditions.

[Montrece Ransom] What type of chronic health conditions do you mean?

[Benjamin Olivari] The conditions we looked at in the study included diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, a history of stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease which is also referred to as *COPD*, asthma, and kidney disease. Now, that's a lot of chronic conditions, however, it's important to note that memory loss was most common among adults with COPD, heart disease, or adults who had experienced a stroke.

[Montrece Ransom] I understand that in some cases, people who have chronic health conditions and memory loss are also at greater risk for Alzheimer's disease?

[Benjamin Olivari] Yes, that's right. In addition, chronic health conditions might also lead to worse health overall and preventable hospitalizations, but there's some good news.

[Montrece Ransom] What's that?

[Benjamin Olivari] The same healthy behaviors that have been shown to prevent cancer, diabetes, and heart disease may also reduce risk for memory loss. There are eight ways people can improve their brain health. Now, these are in no particular order but,

First, quit smoking.

Second, prevent and manage your high blood pressure. Tens of millions of US adults have high blood pressure, and many do not have it under control.

Third, prevent and manage high cholesterol. Nearly 1 in 3 American adults has high cholesterol.

Fourth, maintain a healthy weight.

[Montrece] Would you tell me Benjamin more about what you mean by a healthy weight?

[Benjamin] Sure. Healthy weight isn't about short-term dietary changes or weight loss. Instead, it's about a lifestyle that includes healthy eating and regular physical activity.

[Montrece] OK, thank you. What are the other healthy behaviors?

The fifth one is getting enough sleep. A third of American adults report that they usually get less sleep than the recommended 7 hours.

Sixth, stay engaged. There are many ways older adults can get involved in their local communities.

Seventh, manage blood sugar levels. Learn how to manage your blood sugar if you have diabetes.

And lastly, if you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.

[Montrece Ransom] Thanks Benjamin. That's really helpful. Along with these healthy behaviors, is there anything else people can do to improve or maintain their brain health?

[Benjamin Olivari] There is. We found that only half of adults with memory loss or confusion and a chronic condition had talked to their health care provider about it. Identifying and discussing memory loss early is especially important for people with chronic health conditions. Your health care provider can determine if the symptoms you are experiencing are related to dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, or a more treatable condition like a vitamin deficiency or a medication side effect. Early discussions and diagnoses also provide an opportunity to participate in clinical trials, and more time to plan for the future.

[Montrece Ransom] So what resources are available for people who may want to improve their brain health?

[Benjamin Olivari] CDC's Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program has several easily accessible resources on our website, including the study we're talking about, and the eight steps I just mentioned.

[Montrece Ransom] Thank you Benjamin. For more information, listeners can go to [bit.ly/cdchealthybrain](http://bit.ly/cdchealthybrain).

I've been talking today with Benjamin Olivari, a subject matter expert and ORISE Fellow with CDC's Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program.

[Benjamin Olivari] Thanks so much for having me.

*[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.*