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Help Protect Your Brain by Keeping Your Body Healthy

BURLINGTON – You may already know some ways to keep your body healthy, but what about keeping your brain healthy? Growing evidence shows that being active, quitting smoking, and managing chronic conditions can keep your brain healthier – and lower the risk for brain disease and dementia.

This is Alzheimer’s Disease & Brain Health Awareness month, and public health officials want Vermonters to know that the toll Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia can take are not inevitable. Making key lifestyle changes can reduce your risk for cognitive decline – especially for those in mid-life or with a family history of dementia.

“Addressing Alzheimer’s Disease and promoting brain health are public health priorities, and will continue to be, especially as Vermont’s population ages,” said Health Commissioner Mark Levine, MD.

“Alzheimer’s places a huge burden on Vermonters affected by the disease, their families and their caregivers,” said Dr. Levine. “The good news is research shows that all the great things we do to improve our physical health can also benefit our brains. And it’s never too late to start adopting these habits.”

Alzheimer’s is the most common form of dementia, accounting for more than 70% of dementia cases. It affects 13,000 Vermonters and is the state’s sixth leading cause of death – the highest rate in the country. It is a chronic and progressive disease, with symptoms of memory loss and impaired mental and physical capacity worsening over time.

Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are caused by physical changes in the brain – they are not a normal part of aging.

In addition to regular physical activity, you can improve brain health by maintaining good heart health and controlling blood pressure, preventing and managing diabetes and obesity, quitting smoking, staying socially engaged, and preventing falls and concussions.

“Taking these steps has benefits that will last for the rest of our lives,” said Monica Hutt, Commissioner of the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living.

“By preventing or slowing cognitive decline, we can maintain our independence longer and improve our quality of life as we get older,” Hutt said.

If you are concerned about a loved one or yourself – ask your health care provider to perform a brief assessment. Early screening gives more time for families to plan next steps and access helpful resources and supports.

Know the 10 early signs and symptoms of Alzheimer's disease: https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/10_signs.

Learn more at healthvermont.gov/brainhealth.

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About the Department of Health

We have been the state's public health agency for more than 125 years, working every day to protect and promote the health of Vermonters.

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About the Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living (DAIL):

Our mission is to make Vermont the best state in which to grow old or to live with a disability - with dignity, respect and independence.

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