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### Easy Choices for A Healthier Brain

In a previous article, I talked about the importance of knowing the warning signs of dementia. The sooner a problem is diagnosed, the sooner healthcare professionals can help you treat the problem. Many often wonder what healthy choices we can make to sustain brain health. The Alzheimer's Association suggests the following ten habits to help lower the risk of developing cognitive decline and possible dementia.

1. **Protect Your Head:** Seek to protect your head from injury. Traumatic brain injury can disrupt normal brain function. Wear a helmet for biking and sports activities and always wear your seatbelt in an automobile. If you do experience a head injury, see a physician to rule out a concussion.
2. **Don't smoke and Limit Alcohol Consumption:** Smoking tobacco increases the risk of dementia. By quitting smoking, you can lower the risk to levels similar to those who have not smoked. Alcohol is associated with damage to the brain and an increased risk of dementia.
3. **Eat Right:** Consuming a diet rich in vegetables and lean meats while limiting processed foods can help reduce cognitive decline.
4. **Get Moving:** Try to exercise regularly with a goal of 150 minutes per day of moderate activity. Activities could include walking, gardening, swimming, dancing, or doing whatever you enjoy.
5. **Challenge Your Mind:** Your brain and your body need exercise. Try something new, take up a new hobby. Socializing with others is also a great way to stay engaged. Your brain needs challenges.
6. **Manage Your Blood Pressure:** Your blood pressure is essential for overall health. Not only will it reduce the risk of dementia, but it is good for your heart as well and can help to prevent stroke.
7. **Protect Your Hearing:** Wear ear protection around loud noises to reduce hearing loss. If you are diagnosed with hearing loss, getting a hearing aid can lower your risk of dementia.
8. **Get a Good Night's Rest:** Sleep allows your brain to make memories and enhances your ability to learn new things. Getting enough quality sleep can help reduce your risk of dementia.
9. **Maintain a Healthy Weight:** Talk to your health care provider about your healthy weight. Maintaining a healthy weight is beneficial for brain health.
10. **Manage Your Diabetes:** If you have Type 2 Diabetes, managing it is essential to your health. Diabetes affects all body organs, including the brain, so eating a healthy diet, exercising, taking your medication as directed, and monitoring your glucose levels are important.

While there is no guaranteed way to prevent dementia, living a healthy lifestyle is a great start. Following these tips can help you enhance both your physical and mental health, ultimately leading to an excellent quality of life. For more information about Alzheimer's and other dementia, check out the Alzheimer's Association website at [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)