Healthy Heart, Healthy Brain...

AMERICAN INDIAN and ALASKA NATIVE
RESOURCE CENTER FOR BRAIN HEALTH

Keep Your Heart and Body Healthy to Protect Your Brain

Everyone slows down as they get older, both in body and mind. Big changes in memory or thinking that make it hard to get through the day are not a normal part of aging. These changes could be signs of early dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

1 in 9
People in the U.S. ages 65+ has Alzheimer's dementia

1 in 3
American Indian people ages 65+ develops dementia

You are more at risk of developing dementia if you have:

- ***high blood pressure,***
- ***diabetes, or***
- ***you smoke cigarettes***

You can protect your body, heart, and mind

- **Schedule** a "wellness" visit and health screenings every year with your doctor, even if you feel ok.
- **Keep a healthy blood pressure.**
- **Be active or walk** every day.
- **Maintain a healthy weight** for your body size.
- **Eat a healthier diet** with more fresh vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and fish.
- **Stop smoking** cigarettes or chewing tobacco.
- **Get help managing** your high blood pressure, diabetes, or to lose extra weight.
- **Talk to your doctor about how you feel** because your mental health can affect your brain and physical health.
- **If it is hard for you to get through the day** because of forgetfulness or memory problems, see your doctor right away.

You can do these things today to protect your mind and reduce the risk of or slow down dementia.

Turn over for your checklist to keep your river of life flowing freely

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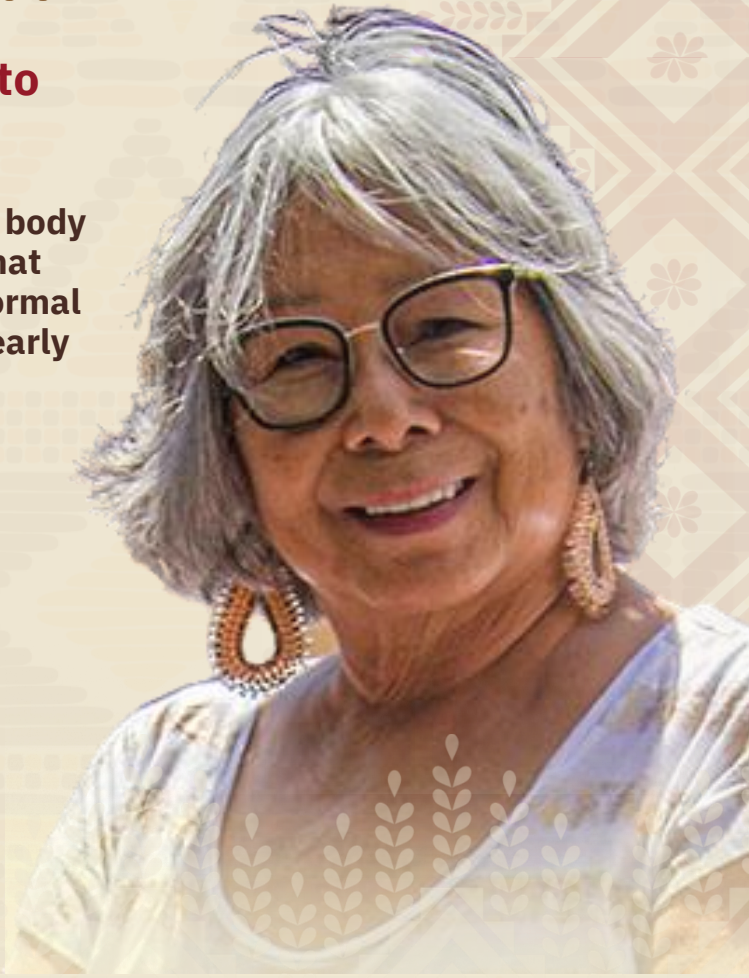

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IA2

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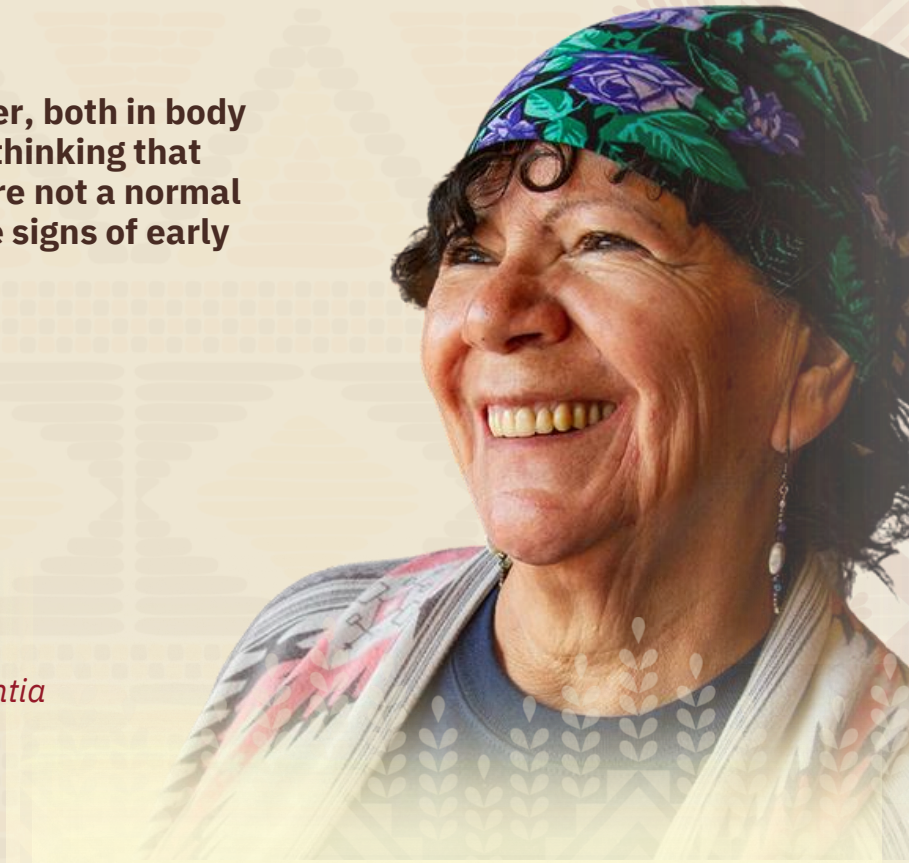

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The River of Life Flows Through Your Heart to Protect Your Mind and Body

Your heart health plays a big part in the health of your brain. Your heart is like the start of a flowing river. Blood vessels that take blood to and from your heart are like connected streams that flow through your body. They feed your brain with oxygen and energy.

You can do things to keep the streams freely flowing through your body, so your heart and brain stay strong and healthy.

Working with Your Doctor

- **Make an appointment** for a "wellness" checkup with your doctor every year.
  - You will get tests and screenings to make sure you are healthy.
  - They are usually free with Medicare Part B or the Indian Health Service.
  - If you have concerns about your memory, talk to your doctor.
- **Have your blood pressure checked** and know your numbers .
  - Your blood pressure should be less than 120/80 mmHg (120 over 80)
  - If you do not know how to take your blood pressure, ask your doctor to show you.
- **Have your weight checked** regularly and know your number. If you need to lose extra weight, ask your doctor about:
  - The right number of calories for your body
  - Ideas for healthier food choices
  - Support for losing weight
- **If you smoke cigarettes or chew tobacco,** ask about medicine, counseling, or help to stop.
- **If you do not have diabetes,** have your blood sugar level checked during your visit. Your blood sugar should be less than 100 mg/dL when you have not eaten.
- **If you do have diabetes**, go to regular doctor visits. Have your blood sugar and "A1C" levels checked. Your doctor will tell you what your A1C level should be.
- **Talk with your doctor** about all the medicines and vitamins you take. Your doctor can make sure they do not cause any problems with your memory, sleep, or brain function.

Other Steps You Can Take

Aim for 20 minutes of **physical activity** a day or 2 1/2 hours a week.

Read food labels to see how much salt (sodium) or fat is in your food.

Limit alcohol. No more than 1 drink per day for women and 2 for men.

Get at least seven hours of sleep each night. Talk to your doctor if you have trouble sleeping.

Eat less salt, sugar, red meat, and highly processed or packaged foods.

Manage extra weight by making small changes. Losing a few pounds makes a difference.

Take your medicine for blood pressure, diabetes, and other problems even if you feel good.

Keep your mind active. Visit with people in your community, help plan tribal events, go to your senior center, teach your language, play cards, or start a new hobby.

www.iasquared.org

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