

Alzheimer's Disease :: Healthy lifestyle could reduce alzheimer's risk

Regular exercise and a healthy diet could go a long way to reducing the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, a neurologist said.

A recent Finnish study showed that middle-age people taking regular exercise at least twice a week could reduce their risk of developing Alzheimer's disease by 50 percent in old age, Dr. Miia Kivipelto said at a conference in Amsterdam.

"An active lifestyle, both physical, mental and social, is preventive. It's never too early to start to prevent Alzheimer's disease," said Kivipelto, who is an Alzheimer's disease specialist at Stockholm's Gerontology Research Center.

An estimated 12 million people worldwide have from Alzheimer's disease, the leading cause of dementia in the elderly. There is no cure for this condition that robs people of their memory and mental ability, but drugs have been approved to alleviate symptoms.

Studies have shown that people with high blood pressure, high cholesterol and obesity could have a greater risk of Alzheimer's disease or other dementia than those with a more active, healthy lifestyle, she said.

People could reduce their risk by getting regular check-ups to monitor blood pressure, cholesterol and weight, she said at a conference on old age organized by Britain's Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Other recent studies show that elderly people who take regular walks are less likely to have dementia. Mental activities such as reading and doing crossword puzzles also help to slow mental decline.