



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

# Healthmatters **Midlife approaches to reduce dementia risk**





# Healthmatters Midlife approaches to reduce dementia risk

## 1. The scale of the challenge

Dementia is a global issue. There are 47.5 million people worldwide living with dementia. By 2050, this is predicted to rise to more than 150 million.

Already an estimated 21 million people in England have a close friend or family member with dementia. Directly or indirectly, it will soon affect every one of us.

Public Health England (PHE) wants to reduce the prevalence and incidence of dementia. The pages that follow make the case for action in midlife to promote healthy lifestyles that can reduce the risk of dementia.

**850,000** people living with dementia in the UK

**By 2025**

over **one million** people could have dementia in the UK

**By 2050**

this figure will exceed **2 million**





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## 2. The risk factors for dementia

Age is the biggest risk factor for dementia and the ageing UK population is fuelling an increase in cases.

Smoking is one of the biggest lifestyle risk factors. Other risk factors include:

- a lack of regular physical activity along with a sedentary lifestyle
- drinking excessive amounts of alcohol
- eating a poor diet high in saturated fat, sugar and salt and obesity in midlife

## Smoking is one of the biggest lifestyle risk factors for dementia



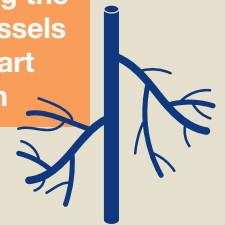
Smoking doubles the risk of dementia by:

increasing the risk of

cardiovascular  
disease

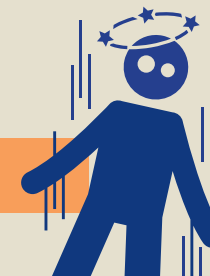


narrowing the  
blood vessels  
in the heart  
and brain



diabetes

stroke



causing oxidative  
stress which  
damages  
the brain





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## 3. Who is most at risk of dementia?

In the UK, 62% of people with dementia are female and 38% are male. This is likely to be down to the fact that women live longer than men and age is the biggest known risk factor for the condition.

There is greater prevalence of dementia among black and South Asian ethnic groups.

These groups are more prone to risk factors such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension and diabetes.

Other pre-existing medical conditions can increase the risk of dementia such as Parkinson's disease and stroke.

## Women and dementia

In the UK,  
**62%** of  
people  
with  
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are female  
and **38%**  
are male



Dementia is the leading cause of death among women in the UK, **31,850 deaths per year**

Women are more likely to take on the role of **caring** for someone with dementia

Women who act as dementia carers feel **less supported** than male counterparts

Many carers feel isolated and depressed – **a risk factor for dementia**



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## 4. Adopt a national focus on prevention

PHE and the UK Health Forum have issued the Blackfriars Consensus Statement which calls for a national focus to reduce the risk of developing dementia.

Public health measures to modify vascular risk factors have contributed to a large decline in deaths from heart disease and stroke over the past 50 years.

It is now believed that what's good for the heart is also good for the brain.

Around a third of Alzheimer's disease cases worldwide might be attributable to potentially modifiable lifestyle risk factors.

Around a **third** of Alzheimer's disease cases might be attributable to potentially modifiable risk factors.



A **20% reduction** in risk factors per decade could reduce UK prevalence by **16.2%** (300,000 cases) by 2050

**What's good for the heart is good for the brain**



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## 5. Act now to reduce the risk of dementia

The NHS Health Check, for adults in England aged 40 to 74, is an ideal opportunity for GPs and other healthcare professionals to offer advice to promote a healthier lifestyle.

Local authorities should also promote a healthy lifestyle in line with the recommendations in the NICE guideline on mid-life approaches to delay or prevent the onset of dementia, disability and frailty in later life.

PHE's One You campaign aims to motivate people to take steps to improve their health through action on the main risk factors such as smoking, inactivity, obesity, and alcohol consumption.

### Reduce the risk of dementia by:



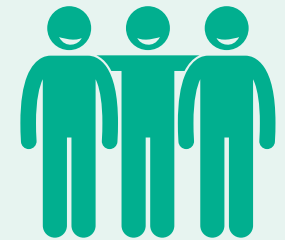
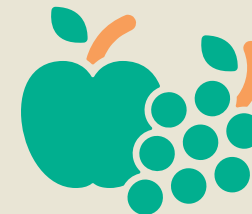
developing, delivering and enforcing comprehensive local tobacco control strategies, in line with current policy

developing and implementing guidance and policies to reduce alcohol consumption across the population



improving environments where people live and work to encourage and enable everyone to build physical activity into their daily lives

supporting people to eat healthily



addressing loneliness and encouraging people to be socially active and mentally stimulated