

Keeping up your overall health may keep dementia away

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Improving and maintaining health factors not traditionally associated with dementia, such as denture fit, vision and hearing, may lower a person's risk for developing dementia, according to a new study published in the July 13, 2011, online issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

"Our study suggests that rather than just paying attention to already known [risk factors](#) for dementia, such as diabetes or heart disease, keeping up with your general health may help reduce the risk for dementia," said study author Kenneth Rockwood, MD, of Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

The study included 7,239 people free of dementia ages 65 and older from the Canadian Study of Health and Aging. After five years and again after 10 years, they were evaluated for Alzheimer's disease and all types of dementia. Participants were asked questions about 19 health problems not previously reported to predict dementia. Problems included arthritis, trouble hearing or seeing, denture fit, chest or skin problems, stomach or bladder troubles, sinus issues, broken bones and feet or ankle conditions, among others.

After 10 years, 2,915 of the participants had died, 883 were cognitively healthy, 416 had Alzheimer's disease, 191 had other types of dementia, 677 had [cognitive problems](#) but no dementia, and the [cognitive status](#) of 1,023 people was not clear.

The study found that each health problem increased a person's odds of developing dementia by 3.2 percent compared to people without such health problems. [Older adults](#) without health problems at baseline had an 18 percent chance to become demented in 10 years, while such risk increased to 30 percent and 40 percent in those who had 8 and 12 health problems, respectively.

"More research needs to be done to confirm that these non-traditional health problems may indeed be linked to an increased risk of [dementia](#), but if confirmed, the consequences of these findings could be significant and could lead to the development of preventive or curative strategies for Alzheimer's disease," said Jean François Dartigues, MD, PhD, with the National Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM) in Paris, France, in an accompanying editorial.

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

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