

# Alzheimer's disease: preventative measures can delay onset

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"We cannot prevent Alzheimer's, but we can delay the onset of the disease until an advanced age with the right measures," says Peter Dal-Bianco, Alzheimer's expert from the MedUni Vienna's University Department of Neurology as part of World Alzheimer's Day on 21st September. The right preventative measures make it possible to delay the onset of the condition. These include, for example, plenty of exercise, not smoking or the increased intake of fruit and vegetables.

"People who do little exercise, for instance, have an 80 per cent higher risk of developing Alzheimer's disease than active individuals," says Dal-Bianco, summarising one of the most important aspects of the current studies into the condition. Even reducing this risk by 25 per cent would save around a million people worldwide from having to experience

Alzheimer's disease. In other words, the condition would only develop after their death (from old age).

Other factors that can accelerate the onset of the condition include being overweight, [diabetes mellitus](#), [hypertension](#), smoking, a lower level of education and depression. Says Dal-Bianco: "If the frequency of these seven 'drivers' of Alzheimer's were cut to zero, there would be half as many patients with Alzheimer's disease worldwide." Currently, around 30 million people around the world suffer from [Alzheimer's disease](#), and according to forecasts, this figure will reach 63 million by 2030 and as much as 114 million by 2050. In Austria, there are currently around 100,000 people who are affected by [dementia](#), and this number will rise to 280,000 by 2050.

## **Alzheimer's prevention works like flood prevention mechanisms**

The researcher from the MedUni Vienna compares the effect of Alzheimer's prevention with flood prevention: "Flood prevention measures do not actually prevent floods. They do not affect the volume of rain, or the characteristics of the ground, or [mountain slopes](#), but they do influence the way in which the water drains and they aim to minimise damage."

As well as a fundamental change of lifestyle, the right nutrition can also have a protective effect against Alzheimer's. "This is particularly true for people who are forgetful or who have a higher familial risk of Alzheimer's," says Dal-Bianco. As well as a generally high level of activity involving physical, mental and emotional activity, Alzheimer's prevention can also include eating lots of fruit and vegetables (especially leafy vegetables such as various types of salad, spinach and chard or asparagus) as well as fish at least twice a week - especially fish such as

mackerel, sardine, anchovy or tuna.

Provided by Medical University of Vienna

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