

Common New Year's Resolutions Not Only Important for Waistline, But For Mind Too

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New Year's resolutions for healthy eating and increased activity are now more important than ever, say Alzheimer's experts. Your mind needs it too.

Research has shown that a good diet, in particular the Mediterranean diet high in monounsaturated "healthy" fats, and regular physical activity, are also important to keep Alzheimer's at bay.

Mental activities such as crossword puzzles are also helpful to prevent onset of dementias such as Alzheimer's disease.

"In addition to these lifestyle changes,

there is really exciting research in the pipelines to be hopeful about in the future," says Dr. Nathan Herrmann, geriatric researcher and psychiatrist at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. "We're involved in new and exciting trials that are investigating not only new medications to stop or slow down the accumulation of amyloid, but also new immunotherapy approaches through vaccines to help prevent or slow down the progression of the disease."

Amyloid is a sticky toxic protein that gradually deposits between nerve cells in the brain in Alzheimer's disease, damaging and killing cells. "It is important to stop this abnormal buildup," says Dr. Herrmann, also a Professor at University of Toronto. "It's

possible these new approaches will become available within the next five to ten years."

January is Alzheimer's awareness month. An estimated 420,000 Canadians over 65 years have Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. Alzheimer's is a progressive degenerative disease for which there is no preventive medicine or cure. It is characterized by a decline in mental abilities and changes in personality and behaviour. Usually there is a loss of functioning that eventually impedes the ability to carry out everyday activities. Alzheimer's disease is under-diagnosed and under-treated in Canada and worldwide.

Symptoms of Alzheimer's include: progressive loss of memory, difficulty with concentration, decrease in problem-solving skills and judgment, confusion and delusions, altered perception, impaired recognition, impaired skilled motor function, disorientation, impaired language skills and personality changes.

Make the commitment to better brain health!

For many Canadians, eating healthier foods, committing to an exercise program and reducing stress are three common goals for the start of every New Year. This January, as we recognize Alzheimer Awareness Month and the kick off of the 2008 Heads Up! For Healthier Brains! campaign, the Alzheimer Society is encouraging Canadian families to keep to their resolutions by challenging people of all ages to join together and make the commitment to better brain health.

Making the commitment is easy, and can include things like choosing a healthy lifestyle, challenging your brain, being socially active and protecting your head. According to the Alzheimer Society, it is never too soon, or too late to improve your brain health and make changes that may also help reduce your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. While currently there is nothing to indicate you can prevent Alzheimer's disease, a growing number of studies are showing there are things you can do to help reduce your risk.

For more information, please visit www.alzheimer.ca and give your brain a boost at BrainBooster, the Society's new online brain gym.