

Life Is Short: Why Proactive Health Choices Are Imperative

Life has a way of reminding us how fragile it is.

Tuesday morning, I returned from a remembrance luncheon for a childhood friend who passed from Alzheimer's at 66. On that same weekend, I received news that a high school classmate had been diagnosed with dementia at 65.

Losing people so young to these debilitating diseases underscores the urgency of taking a proactive approach to our health and well-being.

Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are often seen as conditions of old age, but when people in their 60s are affected, it sends a clear message that we can't afford to take our health for granted.

We need to take control of our health now to help prevent such tragic outcomes.

And YES, there's a big difference between early onset Alzheimer's and late-onset—the first one is predicated on a huge genetic component...but yet and even still,

remember that genetics loads the gun, but the trigger is ALWAYS pulled by diet and lifestyle!

The Importance of Taking Charge of Your Health

Our bodies are the vehicles that carry us through life, and how we maintain them plays a critical role in our longevity. Like a car that needs regular maintenance, our bodies require proper care to avoid breaking down.

Hoping for the best without making positive changes isn't enough. We need to take **intentional steps to improve our health**, both for our sake and for the people who care about us.

Proactive Steps to Combat Alzheimer's and Dementia

Fortunately, there's evidence that certain lifestyle choices can lower the risk of developing Alzheimer's and dementia. Let's look at some of these proactive steps:

- **Healthy Diet:** A Mediterranean-style diet, rich in fruits, vegetables, and healthy fats, has been shown to reduce the risk of cognitive decline. A study published in "The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition" found that adhering to this type of diet was associated with a lower risk of Alzheimer's.

- Regular Exercise: Exercise doesn't just benefit your physical health; it can also improve brain function. A study in the journal "Neurology" found that higher levels of physical activity were linked to a reduced risk of dementia. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise each week and don't neglect lifting weights—your muscle is a longevity organ.

- Mental Stimulation: Engaging in activities that challenge your brain can help maintain cognitive function. The "Journal of the American Medical Association" published a study indicating that mentally stimulating activities, like reading or puzzles, could delay the onset of dementia.

- Social Connections: Having strong social connections can lower stress and improve mental health. A "PLOS One" study revealed that people with active social lives had a reduced risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

- Adequate Sleep: Sleep plays a vital role in brain health. Research published in "Sleep" indicated that inadequate sleep is associated with an increased risk of Alzheimer's. Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep each night and make sure you're going to bed in an honoring way of your circadian rhythm. Remember, your body's healing zone is between the hours of 10 PM to 2 AM, don't miss that!

It's Never Too Late to Start

The good news is that it's never too late to start making healthier choices. If you've been neglecting your health, you can still make a positive change. The key is to begin with small, manageable steps and build from there. Each step toward a healthier lifestyle is a step toward a longer, more fulfilling life.

Life is short, and we all want to make the most of it. By adopting proactive habits, you can improve your quality of life and reduce the risk of debilitating diseases like Alzheimer's and dementia. It's a journey worth taking—one that leads to a brighter, healthier future.