

## 12 lifestyle changes to cut risk from dementia

[A major] review identified the biggest known risk factors for dementia as [smoking](#), [excess alcohol consumption](#), [high blood pressure](#), [obesity](#), [diabetes](#), [head injury](#), [depression](#), [hearing loss](#) and [exposure to air pollution](#), as well as lack of [exercise](#), [education](#) and social contact.

Minimising these 12 risks could potentially prevent or delay up to 40 per cent of dementia cases globally, according to the review of the latest evidence by 28 leading dementia experts from around the world.

“People who have family members with dementia often ask me, ‘Is there anything I can do to prevent myself from getting it?’,” says David Ames at the University of Melbourne in Australia, who was one of the authors of the review. “There are certainly some things you can do that might make a difference.”

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For example, the review finds that individuals can partially protect themselves by not smoking, drinking less than 21 units of alcohol per week, maintaining a systolic blood pressure of less than 130 mmHg, avoiding activities that could lead to head injuries, using hearing aids if needed, eating a healthy diet, and exercising and socialising regularly.

Even older people can delay or possibly even prevent dementia by taking steps to improve their lifestyles, says Ames. “It’s never too early and it’s never too late to think about reducing your risk,” he says.

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