5 Things you didn’t know about Alzheimer’s

Approximately 44 million people live with dementia worldwide, according to the Alzheimer’s Association. By 2050, that number is expected to more than triple to 115 million.

In the fight against these fast-growing numbers, experts from all over the world discussed the latest research at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Here are five things we learned about Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

**Hypertension in old age may save your brain**

High blood pressure is usually called the "silent killer." However, a new study from the University of California now suggests that if you're over 90, hypertension can save the life of your brain cells.

Hypertension may protect against dementia in people over age 90, the study authors say.

The researchers followed 625 participants who developed high blood pressure in their 90s for up to 10 years and found that their risk for dementia was 55% lower than people without a history of hypertension.

Nevertheless, the study doesn't promote hypertension in the elderly, given that high blood pressure is related to other bad outcomes.

The study simply shows that when it comes to normal levels of blood pressure, it might not be a one-size-fits-all with respect to age.

Better late than never

Seniors can lower their risk for late-life cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease with a number of lifestyle changes, new research suggests.

A two-year clinical trial from Karolinska Institute and the Finnish Institute for Health included 1,260 participants aged 60 to 77. One part of the group received a "lifestyle-package,” including nutritional guidance, physical exercise, and management of heart health risk factors, cognitive training and social activities. The control group received standard health advice.

After two years, the lifestyle-intervention group did much better in tests of memory and thinking.

We know from past studies that implementing those lifestyle factors in midlife can hedge against Alzheimer's disease later on. The good news from this study is that these changes can be implemented in your 60s and 70s.

**Playing games makes your brain bigger**

Middle-aged people who were avid game-players tended to have bigger brains than people who did not play games, according to a recent study that looked at brain scans.

The volume among game-players was greater in areas that tend to be damaged by Alzheimer's disease, suggesting the potential for delaying - maybe even avoiding - the disease.

It was suggested mixing it up: Try potentially stimulating activities like learning a new language or switching from reading nonfiction to fiction, anything that poses a challenge.

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5 Things you didn’t know about Alzheimer’s (cont.)

**Exercise benefits the mind too**

Exercise seems to slow the descent toward dementia as well.

Two sets of data from the Mayo Clinic Study of Aging suggest that exercise may positively influence how mild cognitive impairment (a precursor to dementia) and dementia develop.

In one group of patients with mild cognitive impairment, exercising seemed to protect against developing dementia. Data on a different group of healthy patients who exercised -- either lightly or vigorously -- showed they were less likely to be diagnosed with cognitive impairment.

We would never say that these things totally prevent Alzheimer’s, that they will cure you. But they're going to help your brain.

**A smell test may detect Alzheimer’s**

In the future, a test of your sense of smell may help doctors predict your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

In two separate studies, scientists found that people who were unable to identify certain odors were more likely to experience cognitive impairment. The researchers believe that brain cells crucial to a person's sense of smell are killed in the early stages of dementia.

Researchers say this information could help doctors create a smell test to detect Alzheimer's earlier. Early detection means early intervention and treatment to slow the progression of the disease.

In the face of the growing worldwide Alzheimer's disease epidemic, there is a pressing need for simple, less invasive diagnostic tests that will identify the risk of Alzheimer's much earlier in the disease process.

*Source: http://www.cnn.com/*
According to the CDC, 79 million Americans are infected with HPV (human papillomavirus), a sexually transmitted infection that accounts for 90% of all cervical cancers. While a classic Pap smear test is administered to protect women against cervical cancer, the study suggests a better way to detect it. Current recommendations are that a woman should have a primary pap test every three years or she should get two tests at the same time, Pap smear plus HPV test, every 5 years. A study published this month in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute concludes that getting an HPV test every three years is “as safe, if not safer,” than the current recommendations. The study included 1 million women age 30 to 64 enrolled in Kaiser Permanente Northern California’s health care system.

Stressed women + fatty food = 11 extra pounds per year

While we all know that the greasy burger with a side of large fries may not be the healthiest option, researchers at the Ohio State University offer yet another reason why there is little comfort in our go-to comfort foods. Not only does stress make us crave less-healthy foods, stress also causes women to metabolize high-fat meals more slowly. The study found this to be the case in women who experience one or more stressful events a day before eating a single high-fat meal. The study only questioned 58 women, who averaged 53 years old, about their previous-day stressors before giving them a high-fat meal, a total of 930 calories and 60 grams of fat. The study was designed to mimic the amount of calories and fat of a two-patty hamburger with a side of fries at a fast-food restaurant. On average, women who reported one or more stressors burned 104 fewer calories than non-stressed women in seven hours after the high-fat meal, a difference of 11 pounds in one year.

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5 studies you may have missed (cont.)

Being physically fit may help reduce the negative effects of sitting

A new study released in Mayo Clinic Proceedings suggests being physically active could protect you from the risks associated with sitting for hours. Not only does stress make us crave less-healthy foods, according to research recently published in Biological Psychiatry, stress also causes women to metabolize high-fat meals more slowly. The Researchers from The Cooper Institute, the University of Texas and the American Cancer Society attempted to answer the chicken and egg question of sedentary behavior: Is it the actual effect of sitting that is harmful to your health, or is it that people who spend more hours sitting tend to be less physically active?

A study assessed the fitness levels of 1,304 men, who were asked to self-report their sedentary time. The results: Sitting time is associated with higher levels of systolic blood pressure, total cholesterol, triglycerides, body fat percentage, BMI and waist circumference. However, when controlled for fitness, the researchers found that prolonged sitting time is only significantly associated with a higher ratio of triglycerides/HDL cholesterol, and an indicator of insulin resistance.

Based on the results of the study, When taking fitness into account, sitting for prolonged periods has a less pronounced effect on developing diabetes, heart disease or excess body fat.

Do your prescription pills look different for the same prescription?

Journal: Annals of Internal Medicine

Based on the pharmacy's supply or your health insurance, your prescription drugs may be replaced with a generic form of the drug. And while generics are chemically the same thing, the FDA does not require they look the same (either color or shape) as the original drug.

A study published recently in Annals of Internal Medicine found that when a post-heart attack patient’s generic pills change in shape and color, there is a greater risk that he or she will stop taking these potentially life-saving pills.

The study collected data from 10,000 patients discharged between 2006 and 2011 after hospitalizations for heart attacks. The patients were prescribed a variety of generics, including beta blockers, cholesterol medication, etc.

The results: Researchers found the odds that the patient would discontinue use or not refill their medication increased by 34% after a change in color and 66% after a change in pill shape. A previous study, also led by researchers from Brigham and Woman's Hospital, found similar results for antiepileptic generic drugs.

So, if you are judging a pill by its shape and color, it's probably best to look past appearance and pay attention to what's inside.

Source: http://www.cnn.com/