



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Education Key to Care of Alzheimer’s and Dementia Patients

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **Today we talk about ways to support professionals and family members in their care for those with Alzheimer’s and dementia.***

A diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease or another form of dementia changes the lives of the patient and everyone close to them. The role of both professional caregivers and loved ones are crucial to managing the disease and controlling the symptoms.

By learning everything we can about Alzheimer’s and dementia and seeking the help we need we can protect our loved one and our own brain health. The first step is understanding the difference between Alzheimer’s disease and dementia. A [Harvard Health Communication](#) offers a definitive look at the different types of damage the diseases inflict on the brain.

The definition of the word dementia is “deprived of mind.” In general, those with dementia suffer memory loss, confusion, changes in personality and reduction in thinking skills and ability to perform everyday tasks.

Alzheimer’s disease is a specific type of dementia and represents an estimated 60 to 80 percent of all cases. It is caused by the accumulation of tangles and clumps of protein in and around brain cells. The protein blocks communication between brain cells and can eventually kill them.

The second most common type of dementia is vascular dementia, which occurs when clogged arteries fail to carry enough oxygen-rich blood to the brain. Brain cells can die as a result. Lewy body dementia and Parkinson’s disease dementia are similar to Alzheimer’s in that proteins accumulate in the brain, but different areas of the brain and central nervous system are affected.

Neither Alzheimer's nor most other types of dementia have a cure. Doctors focus treatments on managing symptoms and keeping the disease from getting worse.

The [Alzheimer's Association](#) and [US Against Alzheimer's](#) offer resources and caregiver support including support groups, tips, care options, and legal and financial planning.

Another great resource for caregivers is the Harvard Health publication [Alzheimer's Disease: A guide to diagnosis, treatment, and caregiving](#). The downloadable booklet offers a number of tips and hints for caregivers, including practical advice for daily routines and explaining an Alzheimer's diagnosis to a loved one and family members, as well as important guidance on safety.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Keep in mind that every person who has Alzheimer's or dementia is unique. The BHI faculty offers general tips to the day-to-day care for someone with Alzheimer's or dementia:

- **COMMUNICATION.** Say the person's name and make sure you have their attention. Use simple phrasing and short sentences.
- **MEALTIMES.** Make sure the person is comfortable and remove anything that might be mistaken for food, like flowers or dog biscuits. Limit choices by putting only one food on the plate at a time and offering just one utensil. Cut food into small pieces.
- **BATHING.** Prepare towels, soap, shampoo and clothes in advance and have the water ready and at the right temperature before bringing the person into the bathroom. Talk the loved one through each step.
- **SLEEPING.** Discourage long naps and limit caffeine during the afternoon. At night, keep a night light on near the bedroom and bathroom.
- **CLOTHING.** Lay out clothes that are simple and place in the order they will be put on. Dress at the same time every day.
- **DENTAL CARE.** Prepare the toothbrush and demonstrate how to brush. If the person refuses, give them a foam applicator or a cloth moistened with mouthwash and ask the person to rub it on the teeth.

BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:

- Stress resilience
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Social connection
- Emotional wellbeing
- Meaning and Purpose
- Cognitive stimulation and creativity
- Engaging with nature
- General health
- Positive impacts

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, uses a cutting-edge approach to protecting brain health, promoting brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is building brain healthy communities, cultures that foster brain health protective factors and address risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the ***Be Brain Healthy*** movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference.*** To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).