



# DIABETES & BRAIN HEALTH

wiha  
Wisconsin Institute  
for Healthy Aging

Diabetes is very common—about 1 in 10 people in the U.S. have it, and 1 in 3 have prediabetes. If you have diabetes or prediabetes, you probably know how important it is to eat healthy, stay active, and see your health care team regularly.

But did you know diabetes can also affect your brain? Diabetes can damage blood vessels, including those in your brain. This damage can lead to memory problems, called vascular dementia, and may increase the risk of Alzheimer's disease. The good news is, the healthy choices you make every day can help protect your brain as well as your body!

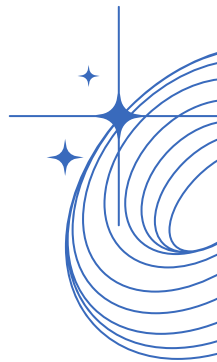
## Healthy Eating

What and when you eat affects both your blood sugar and your brain. Follow your health care team's advice by:

- Eating regular meals and snacks
- Watching portion sizes
- Choosing high-fiber foods like fruits, veggies, and whole grains
- Avoiding sweets and refined grains
- Eating lean meats, fish, and low-fat dairy
- Using healthy oils like olive or canola oil

## Physical Activity & Weight Loss

If you have type 2 diabetes and are overweight, losing even 5% of your body weight can improve your blood sugar and heart health. Exercise helps blood flow to your brain, boosts memory, and encourages brain cell growth. Try to be active for 30 minutes a day or 150 minutes a week. Always check with your health care team before starting new exercise or diet plans.



## Medication and Blood Sugar Monitoring

Take your medications and insulin exactly as your doctor tells you. Diet and exercise help, but don't replace your medicine. Your doctor will guide you on when and how to check your blood sugar using a glucose meter or a continuous glucose monitor. Keep track of your numbers and share them with your health care team.

## Smoking and Alcohol

Smoking and drinking alcohol can make diabetes worse and harm your brain. Smoking damages cells and makes insulin less effective. People who smoke may need higher insulin doses and could have faster memory loss. Drinking too much alcohol can harm your liver and brain. Try to drink in moderation or not at all for better brain and body health.

## Get Support from WIHA

The Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA) offers programs to help you stay healthy and active. Whether you want to manage diabetes, prevent falls, or get support as a caregiver, WIHA has options for you. Learn more at [wihealthyaging.org](https://wihealthyaging.org).

For more brain health information, visit: [Wisconsin Dementia Resources](https://wihealthyaging.org/brain).