

Dementia: Prevention & Care in Texas

September 8, 2025

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Approximately half of dementia cases could be delayed or prevented by living a healthy lifestyle. People who face barriers like poor access to healthcare, education, and healthy food are at higher risk for dementia.
2. Lifestyle changes such as a healthy diet, being physically active, and social connectedness can help reduce dementia risk and support brain health across Texas communities.
3. Programs and policies that support healthy eating and active living in communities can help support brain healthy lifestyles.

Background

Dementia is a broad term to describe a severe decline in cognitive abilities, such as memory, that interfere with daily life activities. Dementia is most commonly due to diseases that cause gradual loss of brain tissue (neurodegeneration).¹

Dementia is increasingly recognized as a critical public health concern in Texas, which ranks **second in the nation** for Dementia disease-related deaths.²

Types of Dementia and Occurrence Percentage:¹

Alzheimer's:
60-80%

Frontotemporal
Dementia: 5-10%

Lewy Body
Dementia: 5-10%

Vascular
Dementia: 5-10%

Other:
e.g., Parkinson's/
Huntington's: <5%

Approximately 50% of Alzheimer's patients also show signs of vascular dementia.³

Lifestyle changes, such as healthy eating, physical exercise, socialization, and cognitive stimulation, can reduce the risk of dementia in older age by approximately 45%.^{4,5}

- Combining the Mediterranean Diet with heart-healthy nutrition - specifically limiting intake of red meat, butter, cheese, sweets, and fried foods - can reduce the risk of Alzheimer's by as much as 53%.^{5,6}
- Physical activity is associated with a 20% decreased risk of dementia.⁷
- Increasing mental stimulation and improving connections with friends and family to reduce loneliness could play a vital role in maintaining brain health and reducing cognitive decline.⁸
- Blood pressure and diabetes control, not smoking, getting adequate sleep, and avoiding head injuries are examples of additional behaviors that reduce the risk of dementia.⁴



\$53,500 per year

The **average cost** for caring for an individual with dementia, including direct medical care, long-term care, and the value of unpaid caregiving provided by families.⁹

Health Eating for Dementia Prevention



Diets high in **green leafy vegetables, berries, whole grains, legumes, seafood, and unsaturated fats** (like extra virgin olive oil and nuts), such as the Mediterranean Diet, can reduce cognitive decline, dementia risk, and the progress of Dementia.^{5-6, 10}



Tailored nutrition based on individual differences of metabolism, genetics, and other biological factors can better support brain health and reduce the risk of Dementia.¹¹

- Texas has the highest rate of seniors (65 years and older) who experience food insecurity.¹³
- Approximately 1 in 7 seniors face food insecurity, with Black and Hispanic seniors three times as likely to report experiencing food insecurity compared to white seniors.¹²
- Given the link between nutrition and dementia, reductions in senior food assistance programs are likely to exacerbate food insecurity, negatively affect the health and well-being of older adults, and contribute to increased dementia risk and cognitive decline.

Nutrition Programs in Texas

Amigos Del Valle, Inc.



- Amigos Del Valle, Inc. (ADV) assists older adults in the Rio Grande Valley to maintain active, healthy, and independent lives. Services include providing medically tailored meals.¹³
- ADV has provided nearly 16 million group meals, which offer an opportunity for socialization and nutrition services tailored to the needs of older adults.¹⁴

Texas Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Division

The Texas Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Division administers three federal nutrition programs designed to improve nutrition for low-income adults over the age of 60.¹⁵



- The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) partners with thousands of providers of adult care centers to serve healthy meals that meet federal nutrition standards.¹⁵



- The Commodity Supplemental Food Program partners with food banks across Texas to distribute nutritious USDA foods to be consumed at home.¹⁵



- The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program partners with food banks and farmers market in San Antonio and Wichita Falls to encourage older adults to consume locally grown fruit, vegetables, and herbs to improve their diets.¹⁵

Meals on Wheels



- In Texas, Meals on Wheels, with support from the Texas Department of Agriculture's Texans Feeding Texans program, provides home-delivered meals and other services to seniors at their homes and senior centers.¹⁶
- The Healthy Option Program for the Elderly (HOPE) provides seniors (ages 55 and up) with 20 pounds of non-perishable foods each month, including items such as beans, pasta, and canned vegetables.¹⁷

Cognitive and Physical Activity for Dementia Prevention



Reducing isolation and **supporting mental stimulation** could play a vital role in maintaining brain health and reducing cognitive decline.^{5, 8}



Across adulthood, engaging in **moderate-intensity physical activity** for at least **150 minutes per week** reduces the risk of dementia as people age.¹⁸

- Having supportive people to talk to and listen can help older adults stay mentally strong, allowing them to think and function better than expected for their brain health.¹⁹
- Computer-based brain training activities three times a week for 30 minutes, combined with regular social activities, help older adults to stay intellectually challenged and socially engaged, reducing their risk for cognitive decline.⁵
- Exercises that increase heart rate are most recommended for preventing cognitive decline. For older adults, these may include walking, running, cycling, swimming, tennis, and aerobics.¹⁸

Physical Activity Programs in Texas

Texercise



- Texercise is an award-winning, internationally recognized Texas Health and Human Services program that offers videos, fitness resources, and free fitness and nutrition groups for older adults 45 and older.²⁰
- Community leaders are encouraged to host Texercise groups where older adults typically congregate, including senior and community centers, faith-based organizations, libraries, and health clinics.²¹

Tu Salud ¡Si Cuenta!



- Based in the Rio Grande Valley, this program promotes being active for 30 minutes at least 5 days per week.²²
- The program offers free exercise classes and walking clubs to increase access to physical activity options.^{22, 23}
- Hike and bike trails, sidewalks, lighting, hydration stations, complete streets, and safe passing laws have made it more affordable to and safer to exercise.²³

Brain Health Programs in Texas

Age Well Live Well



- The Age Well Live Well program, through Texas Health and Human Services Commission, encourages Texans to build relationships with older neighbors to ease their loneliness and social isolation.²⁴

Dementia-friendly Texas



- There are eight dementia-friendly communities in Texas: Amarillo, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Denton County, Fort Worth, Lubbock, San Antonio, and Tyler. These communities are committed to creating accessible social environments that are welcoming to people living with dementia.^{25, 26}

Next Steps

1. **Design Multi-Domain Lifestyle Programs:** Create community-based programs that combine social, cognitive, physical, and nutritional components for older adults.²⁷
2. **Equip Communities to Support Brain-healthy Lifestyles:** Engage employers, healthcare systems, and community leaders to champion brain health.²⁷
3. **Partner with Local Institutions:** Collaborate with organizations like the Alzheimer's Association, public libraries, museums, cafes, and faith-based groups to co-host events and provide accessible venues. Align with initiatives like "Dementia Friendly Cities" to enhance awareness and participation.
4. **Incorporate Intergenerational and Volunteer Opportunities:** Develop cognitive or physical activity programs that bring together seniors and younger generations—such as tech tutoring or community gardening—to foster mutual learning and reduce isolation.
5. **Ensure Transportation Access:** Provide or coordinate transportation options for seniors who cannot drive, such as shuttle services, volunteer driver programs, or partnerships with local transit authorities.
6. **Establish Insurance Reimbursement for Preventive Cognitive Services:** Create policies that allow licensed healthcare providers to be reimbursed by insurance for delivering cognitive and lifestyle interventions to prevent cognitive decline, promote independence, and reduce downstream healthcare costs.

During the 89th Texas Legislative Session, the Texas Legislature developed and passed Senate Bill (SB) 5 to establish the **Dementia Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (DPRIT)**, allotting \$3 billion for Texas researchers to work on dementia prevention and cures.²⁸

The bill is set to take effect on **December 1, 2025**, if approved by voters in the general election in November 2025.

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