

Think Ahead

A Yearlong Dementia
Prevention Guide

2026 Calendar



northern health
the northern way of caring

Introduction

This calendar presents information on 12 *modifiable risk factors for dementia linked to **up to 50%** of dementia cases in Canada as presented in [“Potentially Modifiable Dementia Risk Factors in Canada: An Analysis of Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging with a Multi-Country Comparison”](#) (Son et al., 2024). Son and team created a “12 Ways to Reduce Dementia Risk” Calendar for 2025.

Northern Health would like to express our sincere gratitude to Surim Son for generously allowing us to adapt content from the original calendar to reflect a NH and population health approach, which includes shifting the focus towards positives (e.g., focusing on promoting mental wellness vs. preventing depression, etc.), adding Indigenous-specific information and resources, and recognizing the Social Determinants of Health and the reality that health is determined by many factors that are out of our control.

*The recommendations and ideas shared throughout this calendar are offered with respect and awareness that not all risk factors are equally modifiable for all people, and some are not modifiable at all for some people.

Using QR Codes

Throughout this calendar, we use QR codes for various websites and resources to learn more on each topic. Here are steps to help you:

- **Step 1:** Open the Camera App from your mobile device (either on the home screen, control centre, or lock screen).
- **Step 2:** Hold your device so the QR code opens in the viewfinder and wait until you see a notification pop up with a link.
- **Step 3:** Click on the notification to open the link associated with the QR code.

[Hyperlinks](#) are also included for those who access a digital version of this calendar. Simply click the hyperlink to open the resource digitally.

Practice now with the following QR code to open the study hyperlinked above:



**THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING
THIS CALENDAR FOR 2026!**

Taking any steps you can to address
any of the factors included here can reduce
the risk of dementia. Stay informed
and prioritize your health!

Key Messages:

Understand the health risks of smoking and vaping to make informed decisions about brain health. Here are some key points to consider:

- **Traditional or sacred tobacco** has been used in many Indigenous cultures for thousands of years in rituals, ceremonies, and prayers. It is considered a sacred plant with healing and spiritual benefits.
- **Commercial tobacco products** like cigarettes, cigars, and smokeless tobacco are harmful to your health. Smoking them can harm the blood vessels in the brain, which may raise your risk of getting dementia.
- **Second-hand smoke** is also harmful and may increase the risk of developing dementia later in life.
- **Vaping** is often considered less harmful than smoking, but it still poses health risks for both the person vaping and anyone nearby. The long-term effects of vaping are not yet fully understood. More research is needed to prove there is a link to cognitive decline and dementia.
- **Long-term cannabis use**, whether smoking or vaping, may lead to memory issues. Researchers are still studying how it affects the brain, but so far, there is no proof that it can prevent or treat Alzheimer's disease.

If you are thinking about quitting or reducing use, it can help to talk to a healthcare provider. Getting support may lower your risk of future health issues and promote overall health.

Scan the QR codes below for more information on cessation support:



[Get Help
Quitting Tobacco –
Province of
British Columbia](#)



[Talk Tobacco:
Indigenous Quit
Smoking and
Vaping Support](#)



[About
Cannabis FAQ –
QuitNow.ca](#)

January

2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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25	26	27	28	29	30	31

February

Hypertension – One of the leading risk factors in Canada

Key Messages:

- About 30% of Canadians have hypertension, or high blood pressure, which means their hearts are working extra hard.
- Your brain needs blood, oxygen, and nutrients to work well. If your heart isn't keeping up, your brain might not get what it needs. This can lead to memory problems or dementia.
- Keeping your blood pressure in check can help not just your heart but your brain, too.

Tips to keep your heart and brain healthy:

- **Check your numbers:** Get your blood pressure and cholesterol levels checked regularly. Early detection is key to prevention.
- **Stress less, breathe more:** Chronic stress raises blood pressure. Try deep breathing, mindfulness, or a calming hobby.
- **Take your meds to protect your heart:** If prescribed medication, take it daily and as directed; consistency is key.
- **Cut back on alcohol and commercial tobacco:** Both contribute to high blood pressure. Any reduction can make a difference.

For more information:




[What Everyone
Should Know About
High Blood Pressure](#)



[How to Check
Your Blood
Pressure Video](#)

February

2026

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Key Messages:

Healthy eating supports physical, social, and emotional wellbeing, and can help prevent dementia by promoting brain and heart health and reducing the risk of malnutrition. Sharing food connects us to our culture, traditions, and community, which also supports dementia prevention.

Healthy eating means enjoying a variety of tasty and nutritious foods in satisfying amounts. This includes:

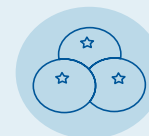
- **Whole grains** like 100% whole wheat bread, oats, wild rice and popcorn.
- **Vegetables and fruit** like leafy greens, fiddleheads, seaweed, and berries.
- **Protein foods** like fish, legumes, and nuts.
- **Unsaturated fats** like olive or canola oil and oolichan grease.
- **Drinks** like water, herbal tea, and milk.
- A daily **vitamin D** supplement containing 400 IU (10 µg) of vitamin D if you are 51 years or older.

BLUEBERRY VINAIGRETTE RECIPE

Servings: 4-6 **Prep. Time:** 5 mins.

Ingredients:

1/2 cup blueberries (fresh or frozen)
1/4 cup white vinegar
1/4 cup honey
6 tbsp extra virgin olive oil



Directions:

1. In a blender or food processor, combine all ingredients.
2. Blend until smooth.
3. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Notes: Try huckleberries or strawberries instead of blueberries!

Certain factors may make it harder to get or eat foods you enjoy, including the amount of money you have, the types of food that are available in your community or your ability to shop, prepare or eat food. In some communities there are programs to help you get the resources you need for healthy eating.

Things to try:

- Canned and frozen fruits and vegetables are affordable, convenient, and tasty ways to add more vegetables and fruits to your menu. Try the [blueberry vinaigrette recipe](#) (source: www.food.com) pictured which uses frozen blueberries.
- Share meal costs and labour by gathering regularly with family or friends for a potluck meal.

For more information:



[Healthy Eating
and Healthy Aging
for Adults –
HealthLink BC](#)



[Nutrition
and Dietitian
Services –
Northern Health](#)



[Healthy Eating
for Seniors –
Canada's Food Guide](#)

March

2026

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Key Messages:

While the brain is not a muscle in the traditional sense, it does have a “muscle-like” quality in that it can be strengthened and its function improved with practice and engagement.

- Challenging your brain boosts blood flow and builds better connections in the brain, which may help reduce your chance of developing dementia.
- It's never too early or too late to start working on your brain health.

Act now for a healthier brain:

- **Challenge your brain:** Keep your brain active every day with things like puzzles, sudoku, memory games, reading, or playing musical instruments.
- **Don't stop learning:** Lifelong learning helps build cognitive reserve. Take courses, try a new hobby, pick up a new language, or learn about a culture or country that's new to you.
- **Maintain social connections:** Regular interaction with friends and family reduces isolation and supports emotional and cognitive health.
- **Tap into your creativity:** Storytelling (real or invented), singing, crafting and building projects are all great ways to strengthen and stretch your brain.

For more information:



[Cognitive
Engagement
Infographic](#)



[Dementia Prevention
According to the
Medicine Wheel](#)

April

2026

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Key Messages:

- Did you know that untreated hearing loss may increase the risk of dementia?
- Almost 1 in 4 Canadians will experience some level of hearing loss and this percent rises with aging.
- The good news is the earlier someone gets help with hearing loss the better it is for brain health and protection against dementia. Being able to hear helps people stay connected to others which is protective for brain health.

Ways to prevent hearing loss:

- Wear hearing protectors in loud places.
- Turn down the volume on devices like TVs, headphones, and earbuds.
- Wear hearing aids if you already have them to prevent or slow further loss.

Get your hearing tested every 2 years when you're over 60 or earlier if you notice a change in your hearing. For instance, if you:

- Find that speech is muffled or unclear, or you're asking people to repeat themselves or speak louder.
- Have difficulty understanding or following conversations, especially in noisy places.
- Have ringing, hissing or clicking noises in your ear.

Learn more:



[Hearing Loss
in Adults –
HealthLink BC](#)

May

2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	 5 World Pulmonary Hypertension Day	 6 #NO DIET DAY	 7 May 7th I care about you! National Child & Youth Mental Health Day	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
 17 WORLD Hypertension DAY MAY 17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
 31 WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY						

Key Messages:

- Did you know being active is one of the best things we can do to reduce the number of dementia cases in Canada? That's because people who are regularly active are less likely to develop conditions like heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, which are all risk factors for dementia.
- Regular physical activity not only decreases your risk, but enhances blood flow to the brain, which supports brain health and function and can help delay the onset of dementia symptoms.
- Any age is the right age to start getting active.

Five Tips for Staying Active:

- **Start Small and Listen to your Body:** Set realistic goals and add physical activity into your daily routine, like taking the stairs or walking or wheeling to the store. Be active in a way that works for you and your current abilities.
- **Enjoyable Activities:** Choose activities you enjoy so it doesn't feel like a chore.
- **Aim for 150 Minutes:** The [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines](#) recommend adults get 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week, including strength and balance activities 2-3 times per week. Remember: 150 weekly minutes is 20-30 minutes per day, and every minute counts.
- **Variety is Key:** Combining aerobic exercises (like dancing, hiking, or snowshoeing) with strength-building activities (like bodyweight or dumbbell training, yoga, or gardening) provides benefits for both physical and cognitive health.
- **Get Active with Others:** Plan activities with friends or family to stay motivated and enjoy the social benefits.

For more information:



[Dementia Risk
Reduction Video](#)



[Ideas to
Get Active](#)



[FNHA Health
and Wellness
Daily Organizer](#)

June

2026

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Key Messages:

- Concussions are the most common type of brain injury and brain injuries are one of the reasons people may develop dementia – especially when severe or there are multiple concussions.
- A concussion or brain injury can happen from a blow to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly within the skull.
- Did you know that a loss of consciousness is uncommon? In fact, 9 out of 10 people remain conscious after being injured.

Take action to protect your brain by:

- Using sports equipment like helmets when at play.
- Always wearing a seat belt in the car.
- Keeping your home well-lit and free of clutter to avoid falling.
- Wearing appropriate footwear with good grip.

Having one concussion makes you three times more likely to have another concussion.

If you think you might have a concussion, see a health care professional to get advice on how to help your brain recover well.

For More Information:



[Concussion –
HealthLink BC](#)



[Concussion
Awareness Training
Tool \(CATT\)](#)

July

2026

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Key Messages:

- Sleep problems, like trouble falling asleep, sleep apnea, and restless legs, can impact your sleep quality.
- Poor sleep is linked to the build-up of harmful proteins in the brain, which can lead to dementia.
- Improving your sleep can help keep your brain healthy and lower the risk of dementia.
- The [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines](#) recommend adults try to get 7-9 hours of good-quality sleep.

Tips to get better sleep and reduce your risk of dementia:

- **Keep a regular sleep schedule:** Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- **Make your bedroom comfortable:** Keep it cool, dark, and quiet.
- **Avoid screens before bed:** Stay away from phones, TVs, and computers at least an hour before you sleep.
- **Get moving:** Regular physical activity can help you fall asleep faster and sleep more deeply.
- **Manage stress:** Try relaxation techniques like meditation, deep breathing, or yoga before bed.
- **Avoid** heavy meals, caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol close to bedtime.

By following these tips, you can improve your sleep and support your brain health, which may help prevent dementia.

For more information:



[Hygiene of
Sleep Checklist](#)



[10 Tips for
Better Sleep](#)



[Canadian
24-Hour Movement
Guidelines](#)

August

2026

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Key Messages:

- Up to 41% of Canadians 50 years of age and older are at risk of social isolation.
- Feeling isolated and not having enough social interactions can increase the risk of dementia because it means less mental stimulation. But don't worry, there are plenty of ways to stay connected and keep your brain healthy!

Ideas for staying socially connected:

- Join community activities
- Find clubs or groups that match your interests
- Volunteer and give back to your community
- Use technology to chat and connect with others
- Join group exercise classes
- Stay in touch with family and friends regularly - even a quick chat on the phone can go a long way

By staying socially active, you can help reduce the risk of dementia and enjoy a more connected, fulfilling life. Reach out to healthcare professionals for support.

For more information:



[Individual Guidelines
for Social Connection](#)



[Social Connection
and Healthy Aging](#)



[Overcoming
Isolation in Indigenous
Communities](#)

September

2026

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Key Messages:

- Just like physical health, mental health can vary. When we feel mentally well, it's referred to as mental wellness. However, there are times when we experience significant stress or distress, known as mental anguish.
- The historical and ongoing effects of colonization impact mental wellness.
- Someone with a diagnosed mental illness, such as depression, can still maintain mental wellness by engaging in activities that promote well-being, ultimately reducing their risk of dementia.

Some things to try:

- **Attend therapy sessions:** Therapy can help individuals understand and enhance their mental well-being.
- **Move your body regularly:** Physical activity has been shown to improve mood and cognitive function, which can help lower the risk of both depression and dementia.
- **Stay connected:** Building a strong sense of identity and belonging through connections to oneself, community, and the land can enhance mental wellness. This includes engaging in cultural practices, spending time in nature, and fostering a sense of community support.
- **Respect Indigenous knowledge and practices:** Recognize and integrate traditional healing practices and knowledge systems. This might include the use of traditional medicines, ceremonies, and the involvement of Elders and community leaders in mental health care.
- **Maintain relationships:** Social connections provide emotional support and can reduce feelings of isolation, which is beneficial for mental health.
- **Practice mindfulness:** Mindfulness and meditation can help manage stress and improve mental well-being, contributing to a lower risk of depression and dementia.

For more information:



[Mental Wellness –
Northern Health](#)



[Wellness for
First Nations –
FNHA](#)

October

2026

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Key Messages:

- Chronic conditions including diabetes are strongly linked to increased dementia risk.
- Diabetes and dementia share common risk factors including behaviours like eating and movement. Acting on these can improve your overall health.
- Managing chronic conditions helps protect brain health by improving blood flow, reducing inflammation, and supporting overall cognitive health.

Tips to Reduce Risk:

- **Screening:** Schedule regular check-ups with your primary care provider to identify trends and adjust treatment plans.
- **Medications:** Make sure your medications are right for you and working well, taken as prescribed, and not contributing to cognitive side effects – ask your local pharmacist for help with reviewing medications and supplements.
- **Monitor blood sugar:** Regularly check your blood sugar levels and follow medical advice to manage them. Be aware of how stress and illness can affect blood sugar.
 - Blood sugar can also be managed by:
 - **Healthy eating:** Enjoy a variety of foods, including whole grains, vegetables and fruit, protein foods and unsaturated fats, in amounts that are satisfying. See March for more information on healthy eating.
 - **Physical activity:** Work up to 150 minutes or more of moderate-to-vigorous activity each week. Choose activities you enjoy and that fit your abilities. See June for more information on physical activity.

For more information:



[Diabetes: Prevention and Risk Factors](#)



[Make it Sacred – Indigenous Diabetes Health Circle](#)



[Diabetes Program: Self-Management BC](#)

November

2026

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Key Messages:

- Excessive alcohol use can increase the risk of dementia.
- Alcohol is a carcinogen; it damages brain cells.
- The more alcohol you drink, the more harm it does to your brain.
- Drinking less alcohol and avoiding binge drinking help reduce harm to the brain.

Tips to Reduce Risk:

- Try to drink less, starting as early in life as possible.
- Any decrease in alcohol consumption will help lower health risks.
- Follow [Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health](#).

For more information:



[Canada's
Guidance on Alcohol
and Health](#)



[Knowing Your
Limit with Alcohol:
A Practical Guide](#)

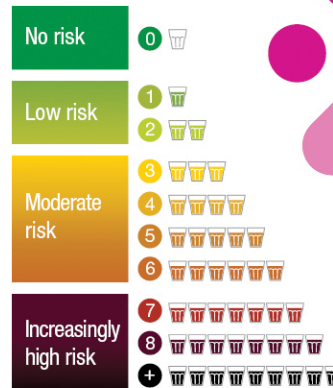


[Drinking Less
is Better](#)

Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health



Per week



December

2026

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