

# 5 incredible Alzheimer's facts you probably don't know

written by Dr. David Perlmutter | July 21, 2016



Today, take a moment to consider these five amazing facts about Alzheimer's Disease. How many did you know before reading?

- **Alzheimer's is preventable.** More than 50% of Alzheimer's cases can be prevented with specific attention to certain modifiable factors like amount of physical exercise, blood pressure and blood sugar level (according to researchers at the University of California, San Francisco). The relationship of the risk for Alzheimer's to blood sugar, and thus dietary choices, was recently revealed by Dr. Melissa Schilling and published in *The Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*. I recently interviewed Dr. Schilling on *The Empowering Neurologist* about this very compelling research.
- **Alzheimer's is treatable and reversible.** We are constantly presented with the notion that "while there is no treatment of cure for Alzheimer's, medical science may one day find a solution." The truth is that researchers have now reversed the condition! Dale Bredesen, and his colleagues at the Buck Institute, have used a novel approach to actually reverse Alzheimer's in a small sample of patients. Rather than attempt to develop a single drug, the magic bullet approach to disease, Bredesen's team leveraged 36 different interventions including reducing blood sugar, increasing physical exercise, lowering homocysteine, optimizing vitamin D and regulating hormones, all of which helped to pave the way for Alzheimer's patients to regain cognitive function.
- **Alzheimer's disease is not inherited.** Medical research, like the work of Dr. Barnes cited above, clearly supports the role of lifestyle factors (that means *choices*) in determining a person's risk for Alzheimer's disease. Yes, a person may be at increased risk for the disease by virtue of his or her inheritance, but that doesn't mean the disease will manifest. Similarly, plenty of people develop Alzheimer's without having any family member with the disease. Again, the point is that each and every one of us can make choices that go a long way towards determining whether or not Alzheimer's will be our destiny.
- **Alzheimer's is not a disease caused by aging of the brain.** No doubt the

risk of Alzheimer's goes up with age to the extent that by age 85, a person's risk is about 50%. But analysis of current trends shows that the disease is manifesting in younger and younger people, and even more so in developed countries. Again, this only highlights the critical role of lifestyle choices, and not just genetic risk factors.

- **Better hygiene may be associated with increased Alzheimer's risk.**

Alzheimer's is related to changes in immune function. Living in an industrialized country limits our contact with bacteria and other microbes, and this may actually lead to a less robust, less balanced immune system. As researchers at the University of Cambridge recently reported:

High-income, highly industrialized countries with large urban areas and better hygiene exhibit much higher rates of Alzheimer's... sanitized environments in developed nations result in far less exposure to a diverse range of bacteria, viruses and other microorganisms which might actually cause the immune system to develop poorly, exposing the brain to the inflammation associated with Alzheimer's disease

Their findings revealed that the relationship between a nation's wealth, hygiene and Alzheimer's rates is "very significant."

This article originally appeared on Dr. Perlmutter's website.