

Risk Factors for Dementia that You Can Modify

One in three cases of dementia could be prevented if more people looked after their brain health throughout life, according to an international study in the Lancet.

It lists nine key risk factors including lack of education, hearing loss, smoking and physical inactivity.

The study is being presented at the **Alzheimer's Association International Conference** in London.

By 2050, 131 million people could be living with dementia globally.

There are estimated to be 47 million people with the condition at the moment.

Nine factors that contribute to the risk of dementia:

- Mid-life hearing loss — responsible for 9% of the risk
- Failing to complete secondary education — 8%
- Smoking — 5%
- Failing to seek early treatment for depression — 4%
- Physical inactivity — 3%
- Social isolation — 2%
- High blood pressure — 2%
- Obesity — 1%
- Type 2 diabetes — 1%

These risk factors — which are described as potentially modifiable — add up to 35%. The other 65% of dementia risk is thought to be potentially non-modifiable.

Source: **Lancet Commission on dementia prevention, intervention and care**

"Although dementia is diagnosed in later life, the brain changes usually begin to develop years before," said lead author Prof Gill Livingston, from University College London.

"Acting now will vastly improve life for people with dementia and their families and, in doing so, will transform the future of society."

The report, which combines the work of 24 international experts, says lifestyle factors can play a major role in increasing or reducing an individual's dementia risk.

It examines the benefits of building a "cognitive reserve," which means strengthening the brain's networks so it can continue to function in later life despite damage.