

SharpAgain Naturally

Preserving Memory, Restoring Minds

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Road Map to Clarity

We created this Road Map to Clarity, in partnership with our Medical and Dental Advisory Board, to facilitate the conversation between individuals and qualified doctors, dentists, and other health care professionals about how to prevent and treat symptoms of dementia.

NOTE: *This Road Map is not a substitute for expert face-to-face medical diagnosis and treatment: Everyone's body is unique, so no set of rules can possibly be right for every person, especially when it comes to working with such powerful substances as hormones, prescription medications, supplements, and toxins.*

There are areas, however, where you can study and even begin to see what works for you. You can, for example, review the dietary suggestions and compare them with what you currently eat. Or, you can take all your prescriptions, supplements, and over-the-counter remedies to an experienced pharmacist to see which ones, individually or in combination, might be hazardous to your brain. Such activities will yield useful information for a discussion with your healthcare professional.

How you proceed depends on your personal circumstances:

- 1.** If you are not constrained by time and resources and have the ability to do a full range of testing and treatment, we recommend you start by finding a top functional medicine/holistic physician, a mercury-safe dentist, and a holistic health coach. They will run all the tests right up front and implement corrective strategies accordingly, many of them concurrently.
- 2.** You may instead try to narrow down those factors that might be causing the dementia by taking the Risk Factors Questionnaire, found at SharpAgain.org, and then address them sequentially. You will still want to seek the help of a functional medicine/holistic physician as you consider each factor.

The task may seem overwhelming at first, but remember to be patient and gentle with yourself or your loved one. Our bodies take many years to develop their current imbalances; it will take time for them to be corrected. During that time, the information will gradually fall into place and become more manageable. If you have questions, feel free to contact us.

1 Nutrition

In addition to fasting at least 12 hours between the end of dinner and next day's breakfast:

A. Correct deficiencies of vitamins and minerals.

- Take a good quality multivitamin/multimineral supplement that contains methylcobalamin and methyl folate.
- Make sure to get adequate Vitamin D3, B6 & B12, K2, and Magnesium.
- Decrease/eliminate all carbonated drinks, especially diet soda.
- Eat a rainbow of vegetables, especially leafy greens.

B. Eat fewer processed foods

- Eat more fresh, whole foods and decrease dependence on foods in boxes, cans, and packages. Shop on the periphery of the supermarket.
- Read labels and avoid foods with ingredients you cannot pronounce. Most of the best foods have the smallest number of ingredients (ideally five or fewer).
- For snacks, eat a mix of carbs and protein: apples with nut butter; vegetables with hummus; a handful of nuts with no more than a few raisins; a couple of squares of high-cacao chocolate (85% minimum).
- Think local, in-season, and organic as much as possible when shopping for food.
- Have proteins and healthy fats (see below) at every main meal.

C. Reduce processed sugar

- Read labels, and avoid added sugars (monosaccharides, disaccharides, fructose, sucrose, galactose, glucose, ribose, xylose—anything ending in -ose).
- Do your best to eliminate refined sugar and processed carbs (cereals, breads, cookies, crackers, and snacks, all of which are highly processed).
- Generally avoid fruit juices, honey, agave, and syrups.
- Limit sugary fruits (overripe bananas, papaya, cantaloupe, watermelon, all dried fruits). Instead, eat berries, apples, and pears (preferably organic), no more than two a day.
- Limit starchy root vegetables (potatoes, yams, carrots, beets).

D. Consume healthy oils and fat

- Store nuts and seeds in the refrigerator as heat can cause them to go rancid. Oils are best stored in a cool, dark place, but over time can go bad. Smell before use.
- Increase Omega 3 fats: flaxseed, chia seed, walnuts, oily fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines).
- Reduce intake of Omega 6 oils: canola, sesame, cottonseed, soybean, sunflower, peanut, safflower, corn. When buying, try to find organic, less-refined oils.
- Other foods that contain healthy fats are avocados, eggs, coconut oil, nut butters, green olives and low-fat dairy products (preferably organic).
- Eliminate all trans fats ("partially-hydrogenated oil" or "hydrogenated oil").
- Use extra-virgin olive oil as a condiment only, on salads, in unheated sauces, or added after food is cooked. Do not use for cooking.
- Coconut oil/MCT oil is a good alternative fuel source for the brain. Add up to 2 tbsp coconut oil per day to smoothies and hot cereal, spread on toast, and use for cooking/sautéing.

E. Minimize grains

- Eliminate gluten from your diet for at least 2 months to see if you feel better. That means avoiding wheat, spelt, rye, barley, and oats that are not labeled gluten-free.
- Track your outcomes: if you are sensitive to gluten, you may feel reduced bloating, gas, and cramps from digestive inflammation, but you may also experience relief from physical, mental, and emotional symptoms as well, so observe everything.

F. Keep your body hydrated

- **DRINK WATER.** Each day, drink 1 oz. of water for every 2 lbs. of body weight (a 120 lb. person needs to drink 60 oz. of water, almost 2 liters).
- Reduce caffeinated beverages, soft drinks, and alcohol.
- For every cup of caffeinated liquid (coffee, tea, alcohol), consume 1 additional cup of water.

G. Eat healthy when dining out

- Ask how food is prepared (avoid foods fried in vegetable oils except coconut).
- Order sauces and dressings on the side so you consume only what you want.
- Send the bread basket back—it's like eating straight sugar!
- Eat until 80% full, and then stop (take the rest home).

2 *Toxins in Food, Water, Air, Work/Home Environments*

Toxins in our environment inevitably end up in our bodies. To be healthy, a body must be able to excrete toxins and waste. It is critical to ensure the pathways of elimination are functioning properly before undertaking any detox program.

A. Food - In addition to the nutrition and supplement recommendations, it's important to:

- Eliminate artificial flavors, artificial colors/dyes, and artificial sweeteners (Equal, Sweet & Low, Splenda, etc.). Replace with stevia, Nu-stevia (less bitter), or Monkfruit (also known as lo-han).
- Eliminate cold cuts and meat processed with nitrates and nitrites.
- Read labels for artificial ingredients and chemicals; avoid these foods.
- If you feel unwell after certain meals, start a food diary and record what food you ate and associated symptoms.
- Eat fruits and vegetables in season and choose organic when possible. Check <http://www.ewg.org> for updates of the "Clean 15" (OK to consume) and the "Dirty Dozen" (eat only if organic).
- Consume only organic or grass-fed meats and dairy products (eggs, milk/cream, ice cream, cheeses, and yogurts).

B. Water

- Purify your water by installing a high-quality filter on the kitchen faucet or under the sink.
- Do not reuse plastic water bottles; carry water in a glass or stainless steel container.

C. Air

- Keep your carbon monoxide and radon detectors up to date.
- If you have allergies, use an air purifier in your home and change filters regularly.
- Avoid polluted air whenever possible; do not inhale around idling vehicles, gardening machines, or other polluting devices.
- Place air-cleaning plants such as spider plants and peace lilies in the home and office.

D. Work/home environment

- Buy household paint only if it is free of toxins.
- When purchasing carpets and new furniture, ask if their manufacturing includes the use of chemicals such as formaldehyde. If at all possible, give new items a chance to air out before exposing yourself to them.
- Use environmentally friendly household cleaners (free of toxins and poisons). Vinegar, baking soda, and hydrogen peroxide can handle most household cleaning jobs, while natural lemon or orange oils work wonders on woods.

E. Electro-Magnetic Frequencies (EMFs)

- Use earphones with an air tube that keeps cellphone radiation a distance from the brain.
- Avoid spending too much time in front of the computer (esp. at night) or near power lines. Take frequent breaks.
- Stop using all electronic devices at least an hour before retiring and leave them outside your room while sleeping.
- Keep cell phones at least 10 feet away from the head of the bed when asleep.
- Frequent-flyers should be aware that large airport scanning machines and flying itself exposes them to significant radiation. Whenever possible, opt out and ask for a pat down.

3 *Effects of Medications*

Singly or in combination, prescription and non-prescription medications can cause dizziness, disorientation, amnesia, sleepiness, confusion, and more. Patients have been known to recover cognition completely just by adjusting, switching, or stopping certain medications.

- Consult with an experienced pharmacist or doctor to review all your prescription and non-prescription medications and supplements to determine if they might be causing symptoms.
- Work with your doctor to make sure you withdraw from medications safely.

4 *Mercury and Other Heavy Metal Toxicity*

Mercury is a dangerous neurotoxin that can produce symptoms identical to Alzheimer's Disease. Sources of mercury include "silver" amalgam dental fillings (50% mercury), large "steak" fish (tuna, swordfish and halibut), and most vaccines.

- Ask for a urine-challenge test, which detects levels of a number of heavy metals, including mercury, lead, arsenic, copper, cadmium, etc.
- If you test high for mercury, and now have or have ever had "silver" fillings, consult a mercury-safe dentist who fully understands the dangers of mercury to the brain, how to safely remove fillings, and how to work with a holistic physician to complete a detoxing process. There are a variety of detoxing protocols that may include chelation therapy, that clear the body of heavy metals.
- Consider having a genetic test to see if you carry copies of the APOe-4 gene, which impairs the body's ability to detox mercury unassisted. If you have one or two of these genes, and you have mercury fillings, make a visit to a mercury-safe dentist a priority.

5 Hormonal Imbalances

An inability to think and reason clearly can be caused by low levels of adrenal, thyroid, and gender hormones (estrogens, testosterone, and progesterone). To get an idea about whether hormonal imbalances might be causing problems:

- Take your temperature upon waking and several times during the day before meals for several days running. A temperature below 97 degrees F can signal low T3 thyroid levels and adrenal fatigue.
- See a functional medicine or naturopathic doctor to have your hormone levels tested, and receive bio-identical or other hormone supplementation, if necessary.

6 Inflammation from Low-Level Infections

Healthy inflammation is a short-term defensive response to an invader or injury in the body. The immune system shuts down certain functions in favor of defense activities, withdrawing energy from cognitive function, social activity, mobility, libido, and appetite. When inflammation's short-term defense cycle is complete, the body re-energizes and restores cognition and these other functions. But if the inflammation response never concludes, it turns chronic, and can become a major cause of dementia. Inflammation can exist throughout the body and can cause pain or be asymptomatic. Chronic inflammation often resides in the digestive tract (the "gut microbiome"), in the mouth as oral infections, and throughout the body as a result of Lyme Disease, mold and other bacterial invaders. It makes sense to consult with a specialist or functional medicine practitioner for such issues.

7 Inadequate Physical Activity, Mental Stimulation, and Social Interaction

We humans did not evolve to be couch potatoes. Humans evolved over half a million years to be physically, socially, and mentally active, capable of both intense effort (like sprinting), and days-long endurance hunting. Failure to engage in activities which require similar exertion threatens the proper functioning of the whole body, especially the brain, which depends for its health on close social connections, a fit body, and a flexible mind.

A. Physical Activity

Exercise is necessary not only to keep our bodies working well but also to promote a strong flow of oxygen, blood, and lymph, and to support the formation of new brain cells. At minimum, plan a weekly regime that will raise your heart rate and support strength and flexibility.

- What exercise should you do? Exercise you will do! Start with walking ½ hour daily to begin building endurance.
- Learn a new activity like ballroom dancing, bike riding, or martial arts.
- Join a gym, exercise with a friend, or work with a trainer to stay motivated.
- Do some form of aerobic exercise 5-6 days a week, working up to 30-45 minutes.
- Do strength training covering all of the major muscle groups 2-3x/week.

B. Mental Stimulation

- Keep learning new things: read books, attend classes and lectures, see movies.
- Do mental exercises on a site such as Posit Science (brainhq.com).
- Combine mental, social, and physical challenges.

C. Social Interaction

Staying socially active helps us feel connected, gives our lives meaning, and contributes to health and longevity. So when we lose close relationships, especially as we age, it's important to rebuild our social life by making new friends. Here are a few suggestions that can make all the difference:

- Engage in sports, games, and activities you enjoy.
- Volunteer and maintain memberships in social clubs and religious groups that are meaningful to you.
- Nurture close friendships and family relationships.
- Schedule social events and attend them.
- Set a goal of making at least one new friend every 2 months.

8 Stress

Stress is a natural part of life—we get challenged, we stretch and grow to meet that challenge, and we relax and recharge when the stressful challenge has passed. When the stress cycle fails to conclude, it can adversely affect our physical, mental, and emotional functioning. To relieve stress, consider the following options:

- Join a local meditation or yoga group.
- Find a YouTube meditation video you like and practice at home.
- Talk over concerns with a good friend, family member, or counselor.
- Spend time in nature and find other ways of "being in the moment."
- Yawn frequently and stretch at least once an hour.

9 Sleep and Breathing Problems Related to Oxygen Deficiency

Airway/Sleep Disorders (ASD) are surprisingly common and often go undetected even by dental professionals. People suffering from ASD experience fatigue, fogginess, and cognitive issues that may become a normal way of life.

If your partner says you snore, or you awaken with a gasp at night, mouth-breathe, or have sleep apnea, your body is at risk or is already suffering from low oxygen levels (hypoxia). In addition, disturbances in sleep patterns cut into time the body needs to clear toxins and cellular waste, and deprive the brain of vital nutrients. To determine if you might be suffering from ASD:

- Ask your sleeping partner if you snore, awaken with a gasp at night, or mouth-breathe.
- Ask yourself if you tire easily and/or fall asleep during the day.

If the answer to either of these questions is yes, consult a dentist who specializes in airway and sleep problems. A sleep study may be recommended.

10 Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

A single trauma to the brain may cause changes in brain tissue that eventually lead to neurological diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. The older one's age when experiencing a TBI, the higher the likelihood that memory loss will accompany the injury.

If you or a loved one falls, is in a car accident, or experiences a head injury playing sports or through other means, make sure to seek medical attention immediately. Treatment for TBI will vary based on the severity of the injuries. A traditional medical approach for treating TBI includes acute care, surgery, rehabilitation (including physical and occupational therapy), cognitive behavioral counseling, and other interventions.

Integrative therapies known to help TBI include neurofeedback and hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT). Acupuncture, cranial sacral therapy, meditation and energy work have been used clinically but no empirical studies have been conducted.