

## Avoid a Round-Trip Ticket Back to the Hospital

When you leave the hospital after an illness, the last thing you want to do is return. But the risk of heading back can remain elevated afterward, depending, in part, on the condition that took you there the first time.

Follow-up care can help, but patients have a role to play, too. Watch your health—or your family member’s—closely during the months after a hospital visit. Report any changes or concerns quickly to the healthcare team.

### THE PRICE OF ADMISSION

The first days home after hospitalization pose a number of risks. For one thing, you’re still recovering.

But that’s not all. Your odds of developing conditions not related to your initial diagnosis also

increase. Why? Stress from the hospital experience, changes in medications, and exposure to new infections create a dangerous mix. You may develop a new illness as a result.

### PLANNING STARTS BEFORE DISCHARGE

Doctors now try to take better care of your overall health while you’re in the hospital, encouraging you to eat well, sleep properly, and move more.

You can help prevent a readmission, too. Before you check out, get the answers to these questions:

- What should I do to continue getting better?
- What problems should I watch for, and what should I do if I have them?
- What medications do I need, and how do I take them?
- Will I need a walker or other medical equipment?
- Do I need to schedule follow-up visits and tests?



**GET IT IN WRITING.** Before you leave the hospital, ask your doctor for written information you can take with you about your diagnosis and treatment plan.



[www.bfm.bm](http://www.bfm.bm)

### BF&M Overseas Healthcare Toll-Free Helpline

BF&M Medical Assistance is available 24/7 with our toll-free numbers:

- 1-888-674-1367 (from Bermuda)
- 1-877-236-2338 (from outside Bermuda)
- 1-519-251-5186 (from Bermuda: collect calls)
- 1-519-251-5185 (from outside Bermuda: collect calls)

See back issues of *healthmatters* online at [www.bfm.bm/news/healthmatters/index.html](http://www.bfm.bm/news/healthmatters/index.html).

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# 5 Simple Brain-Boosters

You can't cure Alzheimer's disease—but you can take steps that may keep your brain healthier and lower your risks for illnesses that harm memory and thinking. Here are some suggestions.

## 1 ADOPT A BRAIN-HEALTHY DIET

A diet that supports brain health is rich in dark-skinned fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, and legumes, with only moderate alcohol intake.

## 2 KEEP MOVING

Regular exercise helps promote the growth of new brain cells. Staying fit also reduces

the risk for heart attack, stroke, and diabetes—risk factors for dementia. Try walking, bicycling, gardening, yoga, tai chi, or some other activity that you enjoy and that gets you moving for 30 minutes a day.

## 3 BE SOCIAL

Staying social appears to protect people from dementia. Examples include volunteering, playing cards, traveling, and working on behalf of a cause.

## 4 STAY MENTALLY ACTIVE

Keeping your brain active every day may help you build a reserve of brain cells. To do

so, stay curious. Read and write. Take adult education courses. Attend lectures and plays. Try your hand at crossword puzzles and other brain-stretching games.

## 5 GET HEART SMART

Having a healthy heart seems to keep the brain healthy, too. Add these behaviors to the list of brain boosters above:

- Don't smoke.
- Maintain healthy blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels.
- Watch your weight. Being obese in middle age can double your risk for Alzheimer's later in life.

### health facts

## How to Stop 5 Dangerous Diseases

Several families in the U.S. who recently traveled to Disneyland came back with an unwanted souvenir: measles. This outbreak and others pose a distinct risk to Bermuda.

Health experts believe that low rates of vaccination have allowed measles to return—and spread. If current antivaccine trends continue, they warn, more dreaded diseases could make a comeback. After all, even those eradicated from the country are only a plane ride away.

### COULD YOUR CHILD CATCH THESE DISEASES?

Emerging threats include:

- **Chickenpox.** Since 2010, there have been between 13 and 48 cases of chickenpox reported in Bermuda each year.
- **Mumps.** Outbreaks have occurred in schools, colleges, and camps in the U.S.
- **Polio.** Bermuda hasn't had a case of polio since before 1979. Still, it affects children in some African countries. Infected people can spread polio for weeks before and after they have symptoms.
- **Rubella.** Also called German measles, this disease can cause severe birth defects if pregnant women catch it.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

How can you fight off these diseases? Vaccines. Evidence shows that vaccines are safe and save lives. Reports from organizations such as the CDC have cleared vaccines of causing autism and many other adverse effects. If you have questions about vaccines, talk with your child's doctor.

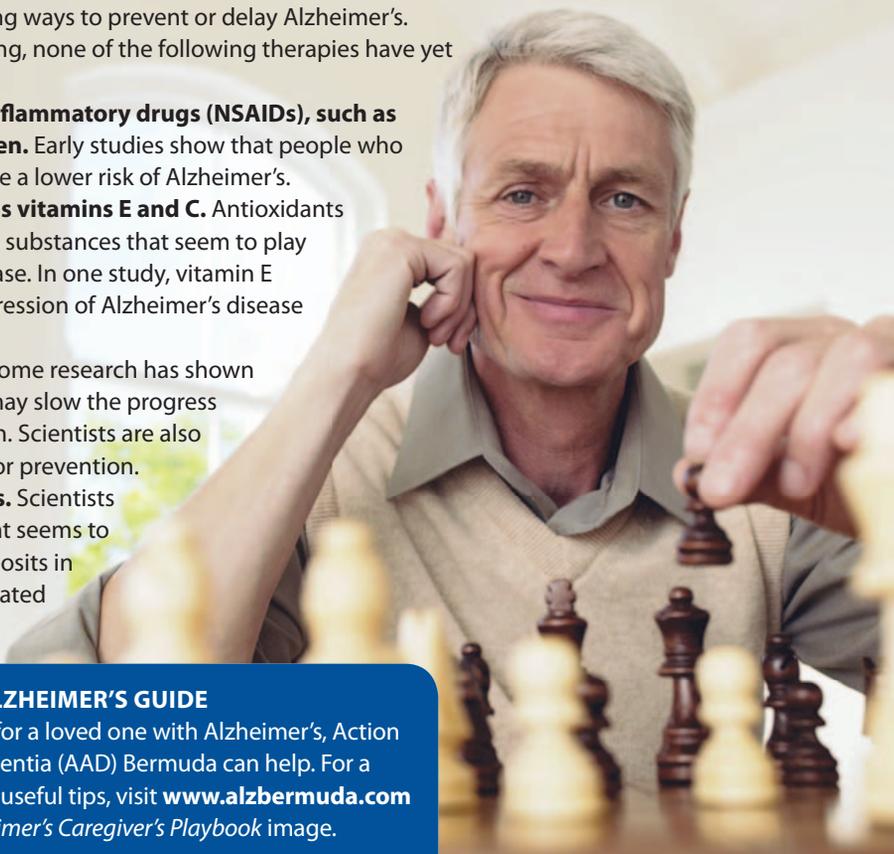
### health facts

## The Latest News on Alzheimer's Protection

As we age, it's normal for some brain cells to die while others shrink and don't work as well. But in people with Alzheimer's, these changes are extreme, causing severe memory loss and personality changes.

Scientists are studying ways to prevent or delay Alzheimer's. However, while promising, none of the following therapies have yet been proved:

- **Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen and naproxen.** Early studies show that people who take certain NSAIDs have a lower risk of Alzheimer's.
- **Antioxidants, such as vitamins E and C.** Antioxidants may attack free radicals, substances that seem to play a role in aging and disease. In one study, vitamin E appeared to delay progression of Alzheimer's disease by six months.
- **Hormone therapy.** Some research has shown that estrogen therapy may slow the progress of Alzheimer's in women. Scientists are also studying testosterone for prevention.
- **Alzheimer's vaccines.** Scientists are testing a vaccine that seems to prevent the protein deposits in the brain that are associated with Alzheimer's.



### GET A FREE ALZHEIMER'S GUIDE

If you're caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's, Action on Alzheimer's & Dementia (AAD) Bermuda can help. For a FREE guide filled with useful tips, visit [www.alzbermuda.com](http://www.alzbermuda.com) and click on the *Alzheimer's Caregiver's Playbook* image.

# 5 Steps to Stem Your Risk for Breast Cancer

Does it seem like breast cancer is in the news just about every day? Need help sorting out the facts? Well, it's true that breast cancer is one of the most common types of cancer among women in Bermuda. And, unfortunately, some risks for this disease cannot be changed. For one thing, you're more likely to develop it as you get older. In fact, women older than age 50 make up most advanced breast cancer cases. Those whose mothers, sisters, or daughters have had breast cancer also face a higher risk.

But you may be able to change other risk factors:

- **Scale back.** Obese women are more apt to get breast cancer, while lean women enjoy a lower risk.
- **Stay on the move.** Studies indicate there's a lower rate of breast cancer in women who exercise.
- **Don't tip your glass too often.** Having more than one alcoholic drink a day may increase your risk.
- **Clear the smoke away.** The rate of breast cancer among smokers tends to be higher than in nonsmokers.
- **Cut the fat.** Your risk for breast cancer rises along with the amount of fat in your diet. Limiting fat, especially saturated fat, may curb your risk.

When breast cancer does strike, it's important to catch it early, when it's most treatable. Mammography can help. Start having mammograms every year beginning at age 40. If you have a high risk for breast cancer, you may need to have screenings earlier—talk with your doctor.



## health facts

### Life After Cancer: Caring for Survivors

You've endured chemotherapy, radiation treatment, perhaps surgery. Then your doctor says these wonderful words: "You're cancer-free." As a cancer survivor, here are steps you can take in the days ahead.

**Manage side effects.** Almost any therapy for cancer can have side effects. You might feel tired, gain or lose weight, or have a hard time concentrating or sleeping. Discuss any problems with your healthcare team. Complementary approaches, such as relaxation therapy, often work as well.

**Schedule follow-up care.** Regular visits help your doctor keep tabs on your health. He or she will watch for signs your cancer has returned and for long-term side effects from your treatment.

**Be aware of your body.** Between visits, take note of how you feel and any changes to your body. Share your observations at your next appointment.

**Make a plan.** Talk with your doctor about exercising (even though you might need more rest than before) and adding more fruits, vegetables, and beans to your diet.

**Cope with your emotions.** Talk with your healthcare team about your feelings. You may also find support from family members, friends, a support group, or counselors.

**HELP IS AROUND THE CORNER.** Cancer support is available right in your community. Visit the Bermuda Cancer and Health Centre at [www.cancer.bm](http://www.cancer.bm) and click on "Support In Bermuda."

## BF&M Breast Cancer Awareness Walk

October 21 at Barr's Bay Park

5 p.m. BF&M Health Fair | 6 p.m. Walk Starts

Register at: [www.racedayworld.com](http://www.racedayworld.com)

By raising /donating \$165, you will cover the cost of a mammogram for someone who cannot afford one. Imagine how many people we can assist with your help!

For additional events, visit [www.chc.bm](http://www.chc.bm), or email [BCAMarketing@chc.bm](mailto:BCAMarketing@chc.bm)



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