

### AUSTRALIA

#### Newspaper

#### Regional

Community centre takes steps to reduce dementia

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2

# Community centre takes steps to reduce dementia

THE Toowoomba Dementia and Memory Community Centre are hoping to reduce the number of people diagnosed with dementia.

Run by the Alzheimer's Australia Darling Downs and South West, the centre provides resources, information, support, referrals and advice to dementia patients and their carers.

The centre has recently added a Dementia Risk Reduction Program to its list of activities.

The program compliments the National Alzheimer's Australia Mind Your Mind Risk Reduction Program.

The national program was launched in 2005 and recommends following seven 'signposts' to improve health and lower the risk of developing heart disease, stroke, diabetes and dementia.

It is estimated that over 240,000 people will be living with dementia in Australia in 2010. Currently there are more than 1000 new cases diagnosed each week.

People of any age who take action to make small lifestyle

changes, not only prevents dementia, but will also improve the longevity and quality of their lives.

Actions that people in middle age take now will influence their physical and mental health 20 to 30 years into the future.

Older people, even those over 65, can still make simple lifestyle changes that may reduce the risk of developing the disease.

Researchers believe that cognitive reserve can be increased and suggest stimulating the brain in several ways, including good nutrition, physical exercise and mental workouts.

Activities already in place at the Toowoomba Dementia and Memory Community Centre include learning to play chess, learning basic computer skills, participating in a social support group or music therapy sessions and practising brain stimulating games using Nintendo brain training, crosswords, chess master and test and improve your memory computer programs.

Art therapy and gentle exercise

sessions are expected to commence soon.

The centre houses an extensive library with ample space where people can read books and journal articles or watch videos and DVDs.

It also boasts two internet connected computers so information on memory and ageing can be researched by the general public who visit.

Friendly volunteer staff are available to help and guide the less confident with online searches.

Any person wishing to participate in the lifestyle activities, access the services or who would like to volunteer to run dementia risk reducing sessions is encouraged to call 4613 0052 or visit the Memory Centre at 9 Bell Street on Monday, Wednesday or Friday between 10am to 2pm.

The National Dementia Helpline also can be accessed by telephoning free call 1800 100 500.

— contributed Alzheimer's Australia Darling Downs and South West

## DEMENTIA FACTS

- Dementia is a general term for conditions causing progressive deterioration in thinking, memory and everyday activities
- Dementia is a public health issue in Australia
- It is estimated that there is more than 212,000 people in Australia with dementia
- Because dementia is more common in older people, even delaying the onset by five years is predicted, in time, to halve the number of people with dementia
- Lifestyle factors have been shown to be linked with lowering the risk of developing dementia but there are no guarantees. We can't say that if we do everything right that we won't develop dementia.



Alzheimer's board members (from left) Marianne Phillips, Bob Cheesman, Joan Flint and president Margaret MacDonald plan the Dementia Risk Reduction Program.

PICTURE: SUPPLIED

## Healthy mind just seven steps away

### ● Mind your Brain

When the mind is active, the brain is protected. It doesn't really matter what mental activities you do as long as it engages you and stimulates the brain. Try crosswords, puzzles, chess, using a computer, writing letters or reading books and newspapers

### ● Mind your Body

Exercise regularly — your brain will love it. Physical exercise is important for maintaining good blood flow to the brain and encourages the growth of new brain cells. Generally whatever is good for the heart is good for the brain. Try to include walking, using the stairs, gardening, dancing and swimming. All types of activity count.

### ● Mind your Diet

A balanced diet promotes brain health. Eat healthily. Generally, eat more fruit and vegetables, eat more fish, have less saturated fats and salt and try to avoid cakes and biscuits. A brain healthy diet is more effective when combined with physical and mental activity and social interaction.

### ● Mind your Health Checks

Regular health checks help maintain a healthy brain. Health checks include monitoring your body weight, blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

### ● Mind your Social Life

An active social life is good for the brain. Involve yourself with others. Go out with friends, volunteer for something that interests you or join a club.

### ● Mind your Habits

Avoid bad habits. Don't smoke or over consume alcohol. Avoid stress and get a good night's sleep.

### ● Mind your Head

Use your brain and protect your head. Wear your seat belt in the car, wear head protection when cycling or rollerblading. Take care of yourself as a pedestrian.

— from *Mind your Mind – A User's Guide To Dementia Risk Reduction* produced by Alzheimer's Australia