

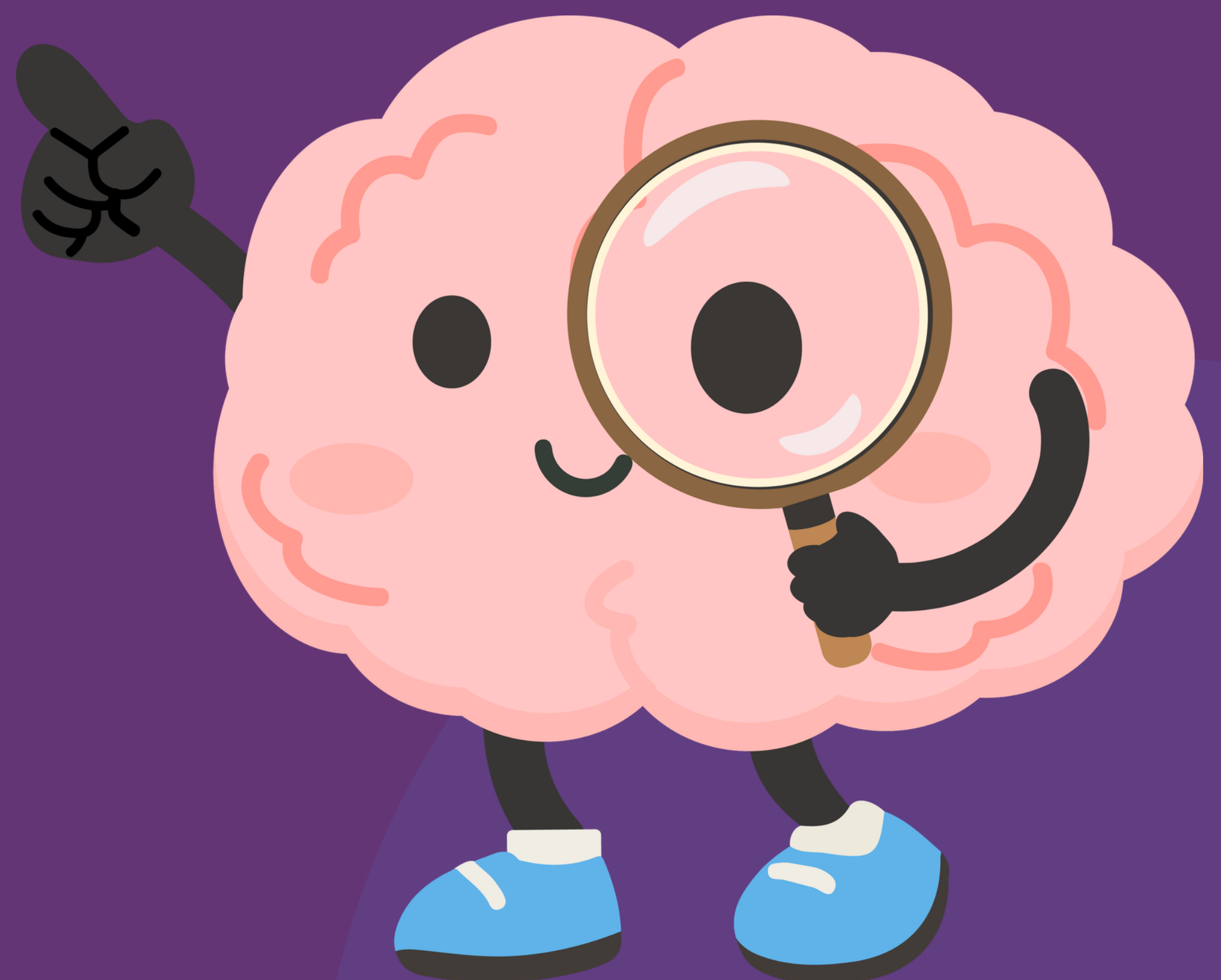


BRAIN-HEALTH RISK CHECKLIST

*A self-assessment tool for the modifiable lifestyle factors
predisposing to cognitive decline*

Up to 45% of dementia risk is linked to modifiable
lifestyle and health factors (WHO, 2026).

Use this checklist to find out where your opportunities lie.



Dr Karen Hartzenberg | Lifestyle Doc

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

- 1 Read through each of the 8 categories below.
- 2 Tick any statement that currently applies to you.
- 3 Count your total ticks and check what they mean on the scoring page.
- 4 Pick ONE category to focus on first – small, steady changes matter more than trying to fix everything at once.



Reminder: this checklist is for education and awareness. It isn't a diagnostic tool, and it isn't a substitute for advice from your own doctor.

THE CHECKLIST

Part 1 of 2 – tick anything that applies to you



NUTRITION

- ☐ I regularly eat a diet high in refined carbohydrates or processed foods
- ☐ I rarely eat oily fish, leafy greens, nuts, or olive oil
- ☐ I don't know my current blood sugar (HbA1c) or cholesterol numbers



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- ☐ I get less than 150 minutes of moderate activity per week
- ☐ I spend most of my day sitting
- ☐ I don't currently do any activity I genuinely enjoy



TOBACCO & ALCOHOL

- ☐ I currently smoke or vape
- ☐ I drink alcohol most days of the week



HEARING

- ☐ I've noticed hearing difficulties but haven't had it checked
- ☐ I avoid social situations because it's hard to hear conversations

THE CHECKLIST

Part 2 of 2 – tick anything that applies to you



MANAGING HEALTH CONDITIONS

- ☐ I have high blood pressure that isn't well controlled
- ☐ I have type 2 diabetes or pre-diabetes
- ☐ I have high cholesterol
- ☐ I haven't had a check-up or bloods done in over a year



SOCIAL CONNECTION

- ☐ I've withdrawn from social activities I used to enjoy
- ☐ I go days without meaningful conversation with another person
- ☐ I don't have anyone I'd call for support if I needed it



ENVIRONMENT

- ☐ I'm regularly exposed to heavy traffic pollution, smoke, poor indoor air quality or other environmental toxins like detergents & inorganic cosmetics



COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT

- ☐ I rarely challenge my brain with new skills, learning, or focus-demanding activities



WHAT YOUR ANSWERS MEAN

Count your total ticks across all 8 categories

0–2

ON TRACK

You're already covering most of the modifiable ground. Keep going, and fine-tune the areas you did tick.

3–5

A CLEAR OPPORTUNITY

Pick ONE area to focus on for the next month rather than trying to change everything at once.

6+

TIME TO BUILD A PLAN

A good moment to talk to your doctor. Small, steady changes across a few areas can meaningfully shift your risk over time.



WHERE TO START:

ONE SMALL STEP PER CATEGORY

Here are a few suggestions to help you get started...

Nutrition

Swap one processed snack a day for a whole-food option | Add an extra serving of veggies with your main meal | Include a healthy fat in 2 meals per week

Physical Activity

Add a 15-minute walk after one meal daily | Try an exercise snack daily at the office | Take the stairs instead of the lift

Health Conditions

Book bloods/check-up if it's been over a year | Record your health markers + set goals for your next check

Tobacco & Alcohol

Choose 2 alcohol-free days this week | Reduce your smoking or vaping

Social Connection

Reach out to one person you've lost touch with | Consider starting a new hobby that involves a group activity or meeting new people

Hearing

Book a hearing check if you've noticed any changes

Environment

Open windows when air quality is good | Avoid peak-traffic walking routes | Switch out chemical detergents or cosmetics for natural or organic options

Cognitive Engagement

Pick up a new hobby, puzzle, or skill this month





You don't have to change everything today.

*Just pick one small step from your checklist –
and start protecting your brain health this week.*

www.lifestyledoc.co.za

*This checklist is for general education and awareness, and isn't a
substitute for individual medical advice. Speak to your doctor about
your personal risk factors and health plan.*



Dr Karen Hartzenberg
www.lifestyledoc.co.za

