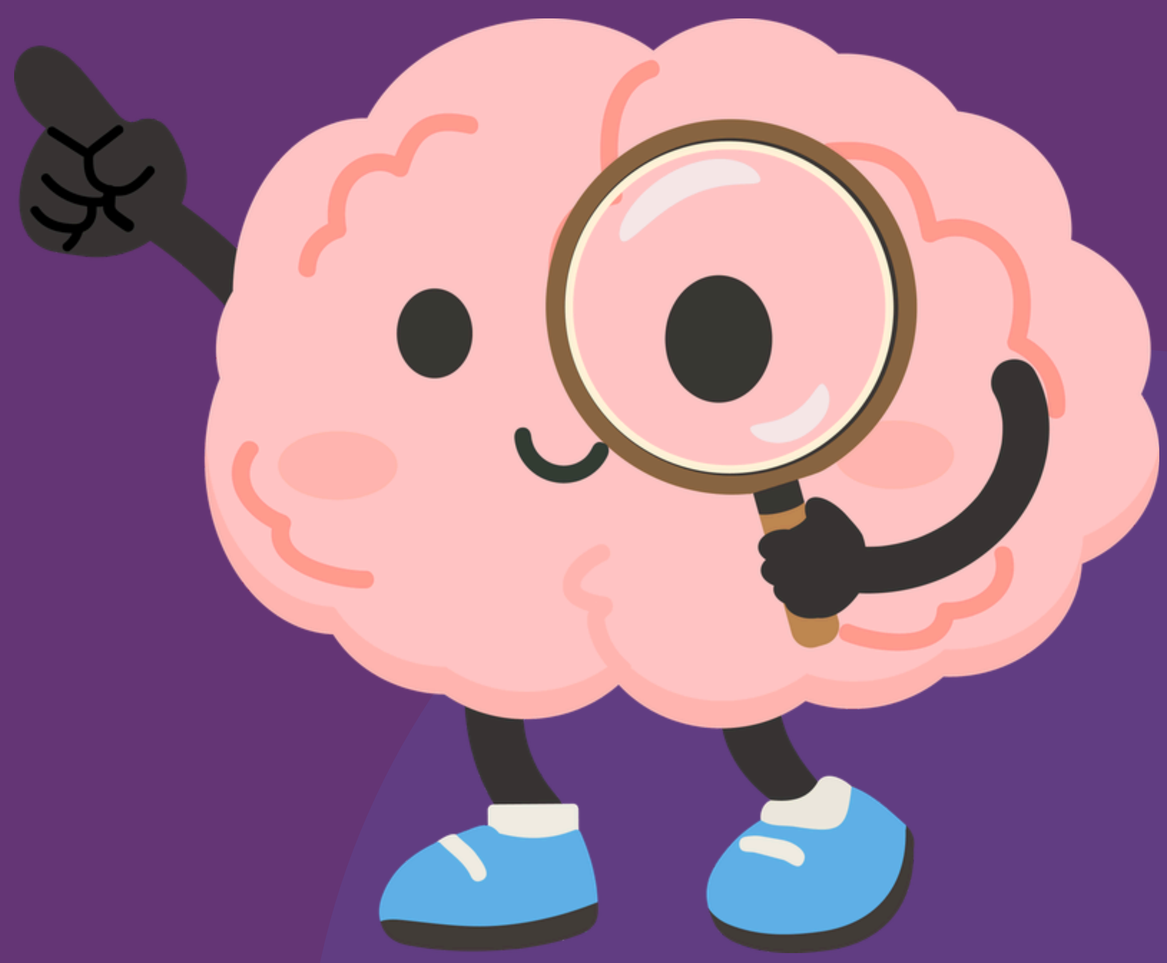
BRAIN-HEALTH RISK CHECKLIST

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- [ ] I've withdrawn from social activities I used to enjoy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 environmenatl 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

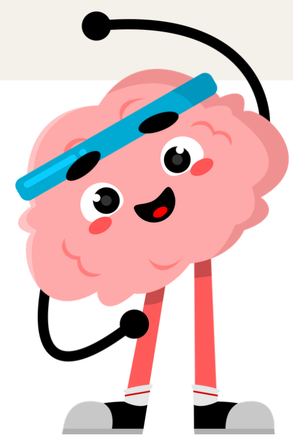
Book a hearing check if you've noticed any changes

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