



boosters

*What are you
doing to take
care of your
brain today?*

Brought to you by:



Brain Health



We often think that “staying fit” refers to the neck down. But, the health of your brain **plays a critical role in almost everything you do!**

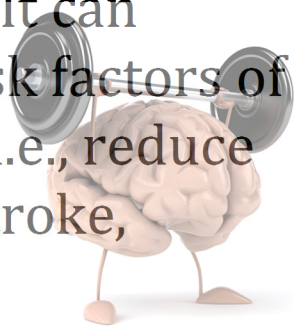
- ... thinking
- ... feeling
- ... remembering
- ... working
- ... playing
- ... sleeping

*There are things YOU CAN DO to help keep your brain healthier as you age. This may also reduce your risk of **Alzheimer's disease** and **dementia**.*

Brain-healthy life choices

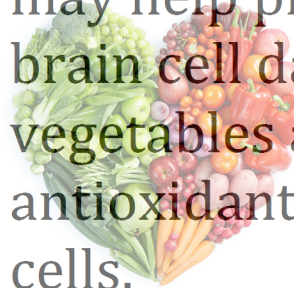
Stay physically active

Essential for maintaining good blood flow to the brain and the growth of brain cells. It can protect against the risk factors of Alzheimer's disease (i.e., reduce risk of heart attack, stroke, diabetes).



Eat a brain-healthy diet

A low fat, low cholesterol diet may help prevent stroke and brain cell damage. Dark vegetables and fruits containing antioxidants may protect brain cells.



Remain socially active

Not only does this help make physical and mental activity more enjoyable, but it can reduce stress levels. This helps maintain healthy connections among brain cells.



Stay mentally active

Mentally stimulating activities strengthens brain cells and the connections between them, and may encourage new brain cells.



Stay Physically Active



More evidence is showing that physical exercise *does not have to be strenuous or require a long duration.* It is most effective when done **regularly**, and in combination with a **brain-healthy diet, mental activity and social interaction.**

Aerobic exercise improves **oxygen consumption** (which benefits brain function), and **reduces brain cell loss** in elderly subjects. Examples: walking, bicycling, gardening, tai chi, yoga.

Combine it with mental activity by plotting your route, observing traffic signals, making choices. **Combine it with social activity** by doing something with family or friends!

Eat a Brain Healthy Diet



- ✓ *Manage your body weight.* Studies have shown that obese individuals were *twice as likely* to develop dementia later in life. **Tip:** Adopt an *overall food lifestyle* (not a short-term diet), and eat in moderation.
- ✓ *Lower fat and cholesterol.* Research shows that those with high cholesterol and high blood pressure had *six times the risk* of dementia. HDL (or “good”) cholesterol may help protect brain cells. **Tip:** Use *mono- and polyunsaturated fats* (e.g., olive oil), *bake or grill food* instead of frying.
- ✓ *Increase your intake of protective foods.* Try eating:
 - **Dark-skinned veggies:** kale, spinach, brussels sprouts, beets.
 - **Dark skinned fruits:** prunes, berries, plums, oranges, red grapes.
 - **Cold water fish:** halibut, mackerel, salmon, trout and tuna.
 - **Nuts with vitamin E:** almonds, pecans and walnuts
- ✓ *Vitamins may be helpful.* Vitamin E (or vitamin E with C), vitamin B12 and folate may be important in lowering your risk of developing Alzheimer’s.

Remain Socially Active

People who are regularly engaged in social interaction maintain their brain vitality!



One study reported that leisure activities that **combine** physical, mental and social activity are the **most likely to prevent dementia**.

Other research found that sports, cultural activities, emotional support and close personal relationships together appear to have a protective effect against dementia.

Stay socially engaged in activities that stimulate the mind and body:

- ✓ Stay active in the workplace
- ✓ Volunteer in community groups and causes
- ✓ Join bridge clubs, square dancing clubs or other social groups
- ✓ Travel



Stay Mentally Active

Those with higher levels of education may have protection against Alzheimer's due to **stronger brain cells and connectivity**. Well-educated individuals can still get Alzheimer's, but symptoms may appear later.



You do not have to make extreme lifestyle changes or sign up for school again, but **start with something small**, like a daily walk. After a while, add another small change.



Keep your brain active every day:

- ✓ Stay curious and involved – commit to lifelong learning
- ✓ Read, write, do crosswords or other puzzles
- ✓ Attend lectures and plays
- ✓ Enroll in courses at your local adult education center, community college or other community group
- ✓ Play games
- ✓ Garden
- ✓ Try memory exercises

Take Home Message

1. *Brain health is critical for daily functioning like thinking, feeling, and working.*
2. Stay physically active doing various kinds of aerobic activity.
3. *Eat foods lower in fat and cholesterol. Choose dark-skinned vegetables and fruit, nuts, and fish.*
4. Stay socially engaged while doing leisure activities.
5. *Do your best to combine physical activity, healthy diet, social activity, and mental activity for added protection against dementia and Alzheimer's!*
6. Incorporate small ways to keep you mentally sharp each day.

Source:

Alzheimer's Association. (2014). Brain Health. Retrieved from <http://www.alz.org/>