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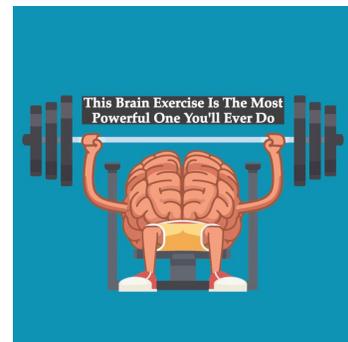
Exercise for your Brain

Have you ever gone into the kitchen and can't remember why? Or you can't remember someone's name while speaking to them? Brain aging and memory loss were once thought to happen because neurons died or stopped functioning. [New research](#) shows that the neurotransmitter dopamine can trigger the formation of new neurons in adult brains. In fact, these dopamine neurons move directly to the brain associated with higher brain function.

Over the years, brain weight and volume decreases. But age isn't the only contributing factor to brain shrinkage, our lifestyle most certainly plays a big part. So, how can we stay sharp as we age?

It turns out that regular journaling can be used to train our attention and strengthen neural pathways. As neurologist and teacher Judy Willis [explains](#): The practice of writing can enhance the brain's intake, processing, retaining, and retrieving of information. It promotes the brain's attentive focus, boosts long-term memory, illuminates patterns, gives the brain time for reflection, and when well-guided, is a source of conceptual development and stimulus of the brain's highest cognition.

[Link to Additional Resources](#)



1. Exercise your brain. Brain games and certain puzzles and brainteasers help create new associations between different parts of the brain, which keeps it sharp.
2. Vary activities. Variety is as healthy for your brain as it is your body.
3. Eat brain food. Many studies show that certain foods slow mental decline. Topping the list of brain-boosting food is any food high in Omega 3 fatty acids.
4. Try new things. Asking your brain to do some new tricks keeps it active and able to learn.
5. Volunteer. Not only does it feel good, but it promotes brain health by raising self esteem.
6. Socialize. We need a variety of brain stimulation, including social activity, to keep our minds sharp. In the study, older adults who were less socially active than those who were socially active had both cognitive and physical limitations.

Friends for Life



Friends play a significant role in promoting your overall health. Good friends are good for you.

Adults with strong social support have a reduced risk of many significant health problems, including depression, high blood pressure and an unhealthy body mass index (BMI).

- One recent study of people with ovarian cancer says those with lots of social support had much lower levels of a protein linked to more aggressive cancers.

This made their chemotherapy treatments more effective.

- In another study, women with breast cancer in a support group lived twice as long as those not in a group. They also had much less pain.
- Other studies show people with fewer friends tend to die sooner after having a heart attack than people with a strong social network. Having lots of friends may even reduce your chance of catching a cold.
- "People with social support have fewer cardiovascular problems and immune problems, and lower levels of cortisol -- a stress hormone," says Tasha R. Howe, PhD, associate professor of psychology at Humboldt State University.
- Good friendships seem to be especially helpful for the heart. A three-year Swedish study of more than 13,600 men and women found that having few or no close friends increased the risk of having a first-time heart attack by about 50 percent.

Developing and maintaining good friendships takes effort. Quality counts more than quantity. While it's good to cultivate a diverse network of friends and acquaintances, you also want to nurture a few truly close friends who will be there for you through thick and thin.

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