



Benefits of Physical Activity for the Brain

Did you know that being physically active is a way to enhance and protect brain function?¹

Over the past decade, extensive research has shown that physical activity can have benefits for overall health — including brain health and cognitive functioning particularly in later years.²

Use It or Lose It!

The human brain is remarkable. It is able to continually adapt and re-wire itself. Even as we age, our brain has the ability to grow new neurons. Neurons are brain cells that communicate with each other.³

It is known that severe mental decline is caused by disease. However, **most age-related memory loss is a result of inactivity and lack of mental stimulation.**³

Physical activity promotes a healthy brain and its mental processes. Recent research has also shown that physical activity may help prevent or delay onset of Dementia.³

Did You Know Walking Is Great For Your Brain?

Walking is great for your brain because it increases circulation, glucose (sugar), and oxygen that reaches your brain. With increased movement, such as walking, your heart has to beat harder, therefore allowing more blood to flow to the brain.³

One study has shown that older adults who walk on a regular basis have a significant improvement in memory skills, learning ability, concentration, and abstract reasoning compared to older adults who live a sedentary life style.³

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Physical Activity - do it for life!



Exercise Your Brain

Increased intellectual activity can help protect you from Alzheimer's disease.³ Here are a few examples of intellectual activities:

- Use different patterns of movements when exercising: March 1-2-3 tap on the spot, then forward to back
- Dancing or Zumba Gold
- Practice patting your head and rubbing your stomach at the same time
- Movements where your arms and legs are going in different directions ie. cross-country ski legs and jumping jack arms then for more of a challenge jumping jack legs and cross-country ski arms
- Word searches or crossword puzzles
- Sudoku
- Doing home repairs³

Make sure to consult a physician before starting any new form of physical activity.



What is Brain Plasticity?

Brain plasticity is the ability of the central nervous system to adapt or change to what is happening in the environment around you. Maintaining health and brain plasticity throughout life is an important health goal. Being **in motion** can help to achieve this goal, as research suggests that physical activity can maintain or improve brain plasticity.³

Do things that strain your brain and force you to have to think harder. Try writing or brushing your teeth with your non-dominant hand, take a different route home or go to a self check-out at the grocery store.

***For more information or resources for Older Adults, contact Forever...in motion at (306)655-2286 or (306)655-2285**

References

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2. Cotman, C.W. & Berchtold, N.C. (2002). Exercise: A behavioural intervention to enhance brain health and plasticity. *TRENDS in Neurosciences*, 25(6), 295-301.
3. The Alzheimer's Society : Brain Health. (2014). www.alzheimer.ca