LIVE A FULL LIFE

Lifestyle Recommendations to Maximize Brain Health

What's the best recipe for optimal brain health? Live a full life! Nutrition, exercise, sleep, leisure activities, and stress all impact brain health. The healthier a person is physically, the more likely that person is to stay cognitively healthy. While there's no guarantee a healthy lifestyle will eliminate the risk of developing dementia, healthy living will certainly improve the odds of long-term cognitive health. Here are some specific suggestions.

Physical and Leisure Activity

- 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days a week that raises your heart rate and causes you to breath faster is highly recommended
- Pursue physical and leisure activities that you enjoy (eg: bowling, gardening, walking, swimming, yoga, dancing, golf, biking, etc.)…the possibilities are endless
- Sit less and move more: hour-after-hour sitting is now considered as harmful as smoking
- If you're new to exercise, start by simply moving more
- Focus on endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility

Cognitive Activity

- Engage in cognitive activities that you enjoy
- Challenge yourself with new activities
- Be a lifelong learner
- Enjoy board games, puzzles, cards, and other games
- Listen to music
- Keep up with technology

Social Engagement

- Spend time with people you enjoy
- Engage in stimulating conversation
- Talk with family and friends
- Learn to video chat with friends and family at a distance

Eat Well

- What's good for your heart is good for your brain!
- The Mediterranean-DASH (MIND) Diet: one example of a diet that has been associated with brain health

Rest, Relaxation, and Sleep

- Maintain a consistent bed and awake time
- Limit napping to 20 minutes a day
- Encourage daytime light exposure
- Keep sleep areas as dark as possible
- Avoid large meals, alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine close to bedtime
- Do vigorous exercise earlier in the day
- Keep bedroom quiet and comfortable temperature
- Practice meditation, deep breathing, or other relaxation techniques

Overall Health

- What's good for your heart is good for your brain!
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Limit alcohol consumption (2 drinks/day for men; 1 drink/day for women)
- Maintain normal blood pressure
- Have regular check-ups
- If you smoke, talk to your healthcare provider and develop a plan to quit

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