

Brain Health:

A Community Conversation

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Introduction:

The good news

**Regardless of our age, we can reduce
the chance of age related diseases and
optimize our chance of maintaining
cognitive health.**



Why is Brain Health More Important than Ever?

- Life expectancy
- Rethinking retirement
- Skyrocketing health care costs
- Current brain research



Pillars of a Brain Healthy Lifestyle

1. **Discover:** Learning new things
2. **Connect:** Stay socially engaged
3. **Move:** Exercise
4. **Nourish:** Eat a brain-healthy diet
5. **Relax:** Sleep better & reduce stress



1. Discover: Learn new things

- **Challenge your brain in new ways**
- **Exercise your brain**
- **Pursue new interests**
- **Stay curious**
- **Challenge your thinking**
 - Grapple with new and complex ideas
 - Seek novelty variety.



2. Connect: Stay socially engaged

- **Stay engaged with friends, family, and community**
 - A key predictor of health and independence
 - Stimulating and challenging and often adds meaning and purpose to our lives
- **Avoid isolation**
 - Seek out people who share your interests
- **Enjoy the companionship of a pet**
- **Volunteer!**



3. Move: Exercise

- **Get at least 150 minutes of exercise each week. Move about 30 minutes on most days. Walking is a good start.**
- **Physical activity helps:**
 - Repair and protect brain chemicals
 - Increase circulation
 - Reduce anxiety and improve sleep
 - Reduce the risks of diabetes, heart disease, depression, and stroke.

Talk to a doctor or physical therapist before you start a new exercise program.



4. Nourish: Eat a brain-healthy diet

- **Eat less meat and fewer sweets**
- **Consume more:**
 - Fish and seafood
 - Nuts
 - Beans
 - Whole grains
 - Vegetables
 - Olive oil



5. Relax: Sleep better & reduce stress

- **Get enough sleep**
 - Maintain regular sleep interval
 - Adjust caffeine use
 - Reduce exposure to light prior to sleep
- **Take time out to reduce stress:**
 - Exercise
 - Meditate
 - Practice tai chi or yoga
- **Laugh and smile**



Risks or Threats to Brain Health

- **Smoking:** increases risk of heart attack and stroke.
- **Depression:** doubles risk for cognitive decline.
- **Certain Medication:** includes over-the-counter products
- **Diabetes:** damages blood vessels throughout the body including the brain.
- **Hearing and Vision Loss:** both linked to trouble with thinking and memory.
- **Heart Disease:** Increases risk of heart attack and stroke.



Tips for Improving Memory

1. Pay attention
2. Avoid multi-tasking
3. Establish a routine
4. Take breaks
5. Use Calendars, reminders and alarms.



What Can You Do Today?

- Pick one thing you can do that may help your brain
- Think of small, first steps such as:
 - Taking a 10-minute walk
 - Adding one serving of vegetables
 - Making an appointment for health screenings or a physical exam
 - Write down what you will do and when
 - Get support from family, friends, or community groups!



Boost Your Brain in 24 Hours

Hint: mentally, physically, and socially active with special attention to diet, better sleep and stress reduction.

Upon waking?

Your morning?

Lunch?

Early afternoon activity?

Late afternoon?

Dinner?

Evening hours?

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For More Information (1 of 2)

- **AARP**
 - MyStayingsSharp.org
 - aarp.org/BrainHealth
 - TheGlobalCouncilonBrainHealth.org
- **Community Programs:**
 - Contact a local Area Agency on Aging (AAA)
 - Or, go to <http://eldercare.gov/>
- **National Institute on Aging at NIH:**
 - <http://nia.nih.gov>

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For More Information (2 f 2)

- **YMCA**
 - ymca.net
- **Virginia State Parks**
 - dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/
- **National Park Service**
 - nps.gov/rich/index.htm
- **Sleep Information**
 - SleepFoundation.org
 - SleepEducation.org

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Thank you!

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