

Physical Fitness for Brain Health

There are plenty of good reasons to exercise, such as improving strength and lowering blood pressure, but here's another you may not be aware of – exercise can produce changes in the brain in a way that can protect memory and thinking skills. A study done by University of British Columbia found that regular aerobic exercise can boost the size of the hippocampus – the area of the brain responsible for verbal memory and learning.

So what can you do? Start exercising – the kind that gets your heart pumping for 30 minutes most days of the week!



Sources:

<http://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/>

<http://umm.edu/health/medical/>

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/alicegwalton/>

<http://theunboundedspirit.com/how-to-re-wire-your-brain-the-incredible-benefits-of-neuroplasticity/>

<http://dailyburn.com/life/tech/train-your-brain-apps/>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/18/brain-stress_n_6148470.html

Brain Foods – Food for Thought

Essential fatty acids, particularly Omega-3 fatty acids, have become a nutritional favourite as they can reduce the risk of heart disease, however did you know they also play a crucial role in brain function? Omega-3 fatty acids are heavily concentrated in the brain and studies have shown they are important for cognitive and behavioral function. Omega-3 fatty acid deficiency symptoms include fatigue, poor memory and mood swings.

So how can you get more Omega 3? Fish, such as halibut, salmon, lake trout and mackerel, are some of the best sources. Try eating fish 2-3 times a week.



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Mindfulness for brain health

Meditation and mindfulness are not new concepts and have been practiced around the world for centuries, however, scientific research is steadily confirming the positive effects on the brain through functional MRIs and EEGs. Strong evidence has shown meditation can relieve anxiety, depression and can improve attention and concentration.

Give it a try! If you have a few minutes in the morning or evening (or both), rather than turning to your phone or TV, take a few minutes to quiet your mind and pay attention to your thoughts.



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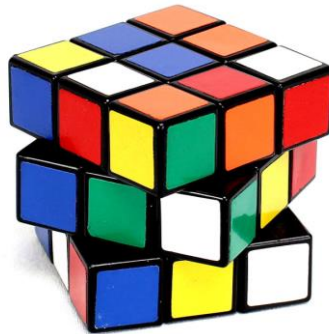
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Break a Mental Sweat

Let exercise “go to your head”! Brain exercises can create new neural pathways in the brain through neuroplasticity; the brain’s ability to reorganize itself by carving out new neural pathways and permitting old pathways to weaken. This allows us to re-wire the brain, which can be beneficial for those looking to adopt new healthy habits or even rehabilitate after brain injuries.

To boost brain fitness and promote growth, perform everyday tasks in new ways and take part in new activities. Learn a new language, take up painting, try a new sport or play a strategic game such as chess. There’s an app for that: [Lumosity](#) and [Fit Brains Trainer](#) can help you improve various aspects of brain fitness.



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Stress the Positive

Did you know that stress can shrink your brain? It can also lead to changes in brain chemistry that can impair cognitive and emotional function. Research finds that a single stressful event can destroy neurons and chronic stress can actually shrink the brain, harming memory, learning capacity and communication.

The good news, is that we can use positive psychology and stress reduction techniques to protect the brain.

How can you manage your stress? Focus on staying socially active. Fostering strong relationships can keep us resilient against stress. Join a club or better yet, volunteer and give back to light up the pleasure centres in your brain!



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