

Ten Tips for Brain Health and Dementia Prevention

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1) Exercise

Aerobic exercise has consistently been shown to reduce the risk of dementia onset, as well as slow the rate of decline in dementia patients. A brisk walk or other form of aerobic exercise for at least 30 minutes, 5 to 7 days per week is recommended. A recent study showed an increase in the size of the brain's memory center after a year of exercising 45 minutes, 3 days per week. *Check out the Teton County/Jackson Parks & Rec activities calendar included in this folder – loads of fun opportunities each month!*

Check out this website to learn about the link between exercise and the brain:

Brain Rules by John Medina <http://www.brainrules.net/exercise?scene>

2) Eat well

Studies show that eating antioxidants helps protect your brain from free radical damage. Free radicals are unstable formations that have been found in the brains of Alzheimer's patients on autopsy. Antioxidants include fresh fruits and vegetables, green tea, nuts and whole grains. Studies do not show that getting these antioxidants in supplement form have the same positive effect.

For more information about nutrition, try this guide to eating healthily:

http://www.helpguide.org/life/senior_nutrition.htm

3) Feed your brain

Learn new things. Take a course, learn a new language, join a book club, take up a new hobby or master something new, such as the computer.

Try some brain games online to challenge your mind:

<http://www.mastersofhealthcare.com/blog/2009/100-awesome-anti-aging-brain-games-online-and-off>
http://www.aarp.org/health/brain-health/brain_games

4) Socialize

Even if you don't like to be around groups of people, be sure to stay in communication with friends and family. Interacting with others is a basic human need and keeps the brain active and stimulated.

Plan to attend an activity hosted by the Senior Center of Jackson Hole:

<http://www.seniorcenterjh.org/activities.html>

5) What's good for your heart is good for your brain

Make sure you get your cholesterol and blood pressure checked and treated if indicated.

Follow these five steps to maintain a healthy heart and brain:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/heart-disease-prevention/WO00041>

6) Avoid head trauma

Wear a helmet for high-risk sports such as climbing, skiing, bicycling and motorcycling. Use good judgment.

Learn about what Traumatic Brain Injury is, and how to recognize it:

<http://www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury>

7) Get plenty of restful sleep

Eight hours is what most people need. There is some evidence that the brain is very active during sleep, storing short-term memories into the “long-term file,” usually during the dream state.

Get tips on how to sleep more easily:

http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/brain_basics/understanding_sleep.htm

8) Avoid tobacco and alcohol

The possible benefits of alcohol for memory are controversial.

Want to quit smoking? Find tips, expert advice and the Quit Guide program at:

<http://www.smokefree.gov>

9) Don't be fooled by dementia mimics

Keep in mind that reversible conditions, such as depression and extreme stress, can mimic dementia. See your doctor if you are experiencing these symptoms.

Depression sometimes appears with different symptoms in older adults. Learn what to look out for:

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/aging-depression.aspx>

10) Take memory concerns to an MD

If you have any concerns about your memory or the memory of a friend or family member, see a doctor. Delay in diagnosis allows Alzheimer's disease to run a more rapid course without the benefit of helpful interventions.

Learn more about symptoms of Alzheimer's:

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers>

Interested in learning more about how to stay healthy, both mentally and physically? Check out the websites below:

National Institutes for Health NIH Senior Health: <http://nihseniorhealth.gov/category/healthyaging.html>

This website is specifically designed for seniors, with information about how to maintain your health and tips on common health issues for seniors. It also includes links to the NIH's popular “Age Pages” brochures, covering topics from exercise and nutrition to medication and health care to long-term planning.

National Council on Aging Center: <http://www.ncoa.org/improve-health/center-for-healthy-aging>

The Center for Healthy Aging connects seniors with local community programs in the topics they want to learn more about. Its website also provides a unique searchable resource library, ranging from fact sheets to research articles.

Center for Disease Control Health Aging: <http://www.cdc.gov/aging>

The CDC offers a website packed with the most up-to-date information on how to age healthily, including pages on Alzheimer's and other cognitive concerns, general health, and the CDC's Healthy Brain Initiative, an initiative designed to meet the growing cognitive needs to senior citizens. Be sure to listen to their podcasts on health topics for older adults: <http://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/podcasts.htm>.