

HOW TO OPTIMIZE BRAIN HEALTH

In honor of World Alzheimer's Day, observed annually on September 21st each year, the world comes together to help raise awareness surrounding Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

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Alzheimer's is an age-related disease and most people affected are 65 years of age or older. According to the World Health Organization, it is estimated that 55 million people worldwide are currently experiencing dementia, and it is projected to triple to 165 million by 2050. Every year there are nearly 10 million new cases. This has an enormous impact on patients, families, caregivers, and healthcare systems globally. It is estimated that as of 2019, treating and caring for patients with Alzheimer's and other dementias has cost the world economies 1.3 trillion U.S. dollars



WHAT CAN WE DO TO OPTIMIZE OUR BRAIN HEALTH?

- 1. Get up and move.** Regular physical exercise improves blood flow to the brain and can release nerve-protecting chemicals. I recently attended a conference and was surprised by recent research presented which indicated that adding a mere 30 minutes of brisk walking to your daily routine can add up to 10 years to one's lifespan.
- 2. Pay attention to what you eat.** Maintaining a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats, and lean proteins can support brain health. Try to avoid processed foods as much as possible.

3. Nutritional and Vitamin Supplements.

There are supplements that can help ensure that you are feeding your brain with the necessary nutrients. Beware though, not all supplements do what they promise. It is imperative that you utilize only products from reputable suppliers that have clinical data on the effects of their products. Most suppliers do not conduct these types of studies and there is limited regulatory oversight in this area. Specifically, Omega-3 Fatty acids, Phosphatidylserine, Vitamin E, B-Complex, Curcumin and Resveratrol are some examples that can help improve memory and cognitive function. Some research suggests that supplementation may have neuroprotective effects and can support brain health.

4. Be sure to Hydrate. It is estimated that 80% of our brain is water. Even slight dehydration can cause fatigue, headaches, and a lack of mental clarity. Try to have yourself on a regular water consumption schedule.

5. Reduce the stress in your life. Try new techniques to help yourself relax. There are numerous meditations, mindfulness exercises, and Yoga sessions available on YouTube. Start with just a 5 or 10 minute session and notice the result. You will be pleasantly surprised.

6. Stay connected. As we grow older, maintaining social connections can become more difficult and can lead to cognitive decline. Join a club, volunteer, or just visit a friend or neighbor to help boost your mood and outlook.

7. Keep your brain active. Reading, doing puzzles, gardening, sewing, or learning a new skill can all help maintain cognitive function.

8. Get enough Sleep. Aim for 7 to 9 hours a night to help your system restore and rejuvenate. It's ok to nap too!

WHAT SHOULD WE AVOID?

1. Don't drink an excessive amount of Alcohol. It has been proven that heavy alcohol use can have neurotoxic effects on the brain.



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2. Avoid Smoking. Even secondhand exposure to smoke can damage blood vessels and reduce blood flow to the brain.

3. Avoid Artificial Sweeteners. Some studies have linked artificial sweeteners like Aspartame to neurological problems. More research is needed in this area but best to avoid it.

4. Avoid MSG (Monosodium Glutamate). This flavor enhancer is added to many processed foods. It can cause headaches, nausea, and dizziness in some individuals.

5. Limit Processed Foods. Stay away from fast food and any kind of food that comes in a box. Eat fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts, and seeds.

6. Prolonged sitting. Try to stand up and move around for 1-3 minutes every hour. This helps muscle strength and blood flow to the brain.

It is my feeling that we all can do a little better to ensure that we maintain a healthy lifestyle and contribute to our longevity with simple daily actions. We are well positioned at this current time to enhance our quality of life and to keep ourselves engaged and experiencing all that life has to offer. Stay well. Be Happy.

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