



Activ8 Your Brain

A BRAIN HEALTH INITIATIVE

THE EIGHT PILLARS OF BRAIN HEALTH

Aging causes changes in all parts of the body, including the brain. Research suggests there are things you can do as you get older to keep your brain as healthy as possible so you can stay independent for as long as possible. Brain health is supported by eight "pillars". Attention to these pillars of brain health may reduce your risk of cognitive decline as you get older. Indeed, many studies have shown that the best results are seen when multiple approaches are used in combination.



THE EIGHT PILLARS OF BRAIN HEALTH



1. Stay Active

Research supports a strong link between physical activity and brain health across the lifespan. Being physically active can help you feel better, have more energy, sleep better, and improve your strength and balance.



2. Eat Well

Foods that are good for your heart and your overall health—fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, lean meats and fish—are also good for your brain. Some studies have suggested that specific vitamins and nutrients may also improve brain health.



3. Sleep Well

Getting a good night's sleep not only makes you feel more alert and energetic, but can have long-term effects on your health. Not getting enough sleep impairs your ability to multi-task and think in creative ways and affects memory and attention.



4. Exercise Your Brain

Just as your body needs to be exercised, so does your brain. Stimulate your mind with mentally challenging activities such as reading, playing games, doing puzzles, learning new things, taking up a hobby, or volunteering.



5. Connect with Friends and Family

Many studies have shown that across the lifespan, increased social activity is linked to a lower rate of cognitive decline. People who have more social contacts score higher on tests of memory and executive function (the cognitive processes that help you plan, organize, and complete tasks).



6. Relax and Reduce Stress

Chronic stress is known to damage the brain and cause problems with learning and memory. These mind-body approaches such as meditation, yoga, and Tai Chi have been shown to relieve symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and insomnia. And they also change brain structure and function and reduce inflammation in brain areas involved in attention and memory.



7. Control Risk Factors

The risk of experiencing age-related cognitive decline is influenced by age and genetics, but also by factors that you can control by adopting a healthy lifestyle and getting treatment for conditions that increase the risk of cognitive impairment. These conditions include diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and depression.



8. Get Involved in Research

Today there are many types of research studies seeking volunteers. The key is you can choose a research study that is right for you and may lead to scientific breakthroughs that will help us in understanding how to keep our brains healthy.

To find our research partners across the country, visit
www.memorystrings.org