

YOUR BRAIN MATTERS

A GUIDE TO HEALTHY HEARTS & MINDS

Being brain healthy is important at any age, whether you're young or old. Scientific research suggests that living a brain healthy life, particularly during mid-life (generally from 40 to 65 years of age), may reduce a person's risk of developing dementia later in life. To live a brain healthy life, you need to look after your brain, your body, and your heart. They are all important.

KEEPING YOUR BRAIN ACTIVE MATTERS

Keep your brain challenged and be socially active.

Scientists have found that challenging the brain with new activities helps to build new brain cells and strengthen connections between them. This helps to give the brain more 'reserve' so that it can cope better and keep working properly if any of the brain cells are damaged or die.

Choose activities that are challenging and you enjoy doing. Challenge yourself often and keep learning new things throughout your life.

Participating in social activities and interacting with others exercises brain cells and strengthens the connections between them. Social activities that involve mental activity and physical activity provide even greater benefit for brain health and reducing the risk of developing dementia. So try to do some of these as well.

Catch up with family and friends to keep your brain active – even better, catch up over a walk



Organise cards or games nights with friends or join a local community club



Learn to play a musical instrument or go to the theatre or a concert



Learn new things or participate in activities you enjoy such as painting, craft or orienteering



Sign up for a short course in something new like yoga, woodwork or photography – you will learn new skills and meet new people



BrainyApp[™]

If you would like a fun and interactive way of looking after your brain health, go to your app store and download BrainyApp on your smartphone or tablet. Visit brainyapp.com.au for more information.

BEING FIT AND HEALTHY MATTERS

Eat healthy and participate in regular physical activity. Your brain needs a range of nutrients, fluids and energy to work properly.

Avoid a high intake of foods that are high in saturated fats (butter, deep fried food, processed deli meats, cakes, pastries and biscuits). Choose a variety of foods that include vegetables, fruit, wholegrains, nuts and reduced fat dairy products. Eat fish, lean meat and cook with monounsaturated or polyunsaturated oils (canola, olive, sunflower and soybean oils).

If you drink alcohol, you should only drink in moderation, which is no more than two standard drinks per day.

Regular physical activity is beneficial for brain health. It helps with blood flow and oxygen supply to the brain.

Try to do at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise each day. Choose activities that you enjoy doing such as walking, swimming, dancing, tai chi or join an exercise group.

Learn to dance – it's great exercise for your body and brain



Eat a variety of foods from different food groups and cut back on saturated fats



Include omega 3 fatty acids from oily fish and other sources such as walnuts in your diet



Enjoy two pieces of fruit a day – make a fruit salad, include at breakfast



Include five serves of vegetables in your diet each day



Build at least 30 minutes of physical activity into your normal daily routine



LOOKING AFTER YOUR HEART MATTERS

What is good for the heart is good for the brain.

Research indicates that having diabetes, high cholesterol or high blood pressure, and not treating them effectively, can damage the blood vessels in the brain and affect brain function and thinking skills.

It is important to have regular health checks and follow the advice of your doctor or health professional. Manage your blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and body weight at levels that are healthy for you, and follow their treatment advice.

Evidence shows that smoking increases the risk of dementia. To keep your brain healthy, smoking should be avoided.

Speak to your health professional for advice on how to lose excess weight



Have your blood pressure checked regularly



What's good for the heart is also good for the brain – speak to your doctor about checking your blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and weight regularly



If you're 45+, you should get regular heart and stroke risk assessments



Avoid smoking – speak to your health professional or call Quitline on 13 78 48 for help on how to quit



For more information on living a brain healthy lifestyle visit Alzheimer's Australia's yourbrainmatters.org.au



Or call the National Dementia Helpline **1800 100 500**
For language assistance call the Telephone Interpreter Service on **131 450**