



Develop Healthy Brain Habits

CHALLENGE
Give your brain a daily workout

Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Develop Healthy Brain Habits."
2. To complete the challenge, practice healthy brain habits on at least 22 days this month.
3. Keep a record of your completed challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

Use it or lose it. That's what your credit card company might say about your reward points. And some employers impose the same rules for vacation time. But the use-it-or-lose-it rule also applies to your brain.

Lost your keys? Walked into a room and forgot why you were there? Missed an important appointment because it slipped your mind? If you have ever felt like your memory was slipping, you're not alone. Brain function is always in flux. And it's influenced by a wide variety of factors like hydration, nutrition, sleep, social interaction, exercise, and engagement.

Giving your brain what it needs can improve your memory, recall speed, problem-solving skills, and attention span. It can even help prevent age-related brain diseases. Give your brain a daily workout and Develop Healthy Brain Habits.

Healthy Habits for a Better Brain

Before birth your brain begins forming connections that help you store and recall information. It contains about 100 billion neurons that transmit information. Your brain processes 70,000 thoughts, decisions, and ideas a day. It requires about 25 percent of your body's energy and oxygen supply.

Take the Healthy Brain Habits Quiz

How much do you know about healthy brain habits? Take this quiz to find out.

T F

1. Less than 8 hours of sleep a day can limit your brain's ability to store and recall information.
2. Exercise at any age enlarges the hippocampus in the brain, improves brain activity, and memory recall.
3. If you are obese, your risk for developing dementia is 80 percent higher than a healthy weight person.
4. Solving crossword puzzles, Sudoku puzzles, and games of strategy help maintain brain function.
5. Proper hydration improves mood and response times needed for decision making and memory recall.

If you answered any of these statements incorrectly, you may benefit from learning more about ways to keep your brain healthy. Your brain functions best when it is challenged regularly to form memories, store information, and engaged to recall it. Proper nutrition, hydration, sleep, and exercise can all help. Your lifestyle choices also help keep your brain healthy and active and prevent dementia and brain diseases.

Source: American Psychological Association.

1. True. 2. True. 3. True. 4. True. 5. True.



What is anomia?

Anomia (uh-noh-mee-uh) is that tip-of-your-tongue moment when you can almost remember something, but it just won't come to you.

And your brain needs its own regiment of nutrition and exercise, just like the rest of your body. Practice these six healthy habits to boost your brain power:

1. Drink More Water

Your brain is about 75 percent water. When you are dehydrated, your memory, ability to concentrate, and motivation lag. Other brain functions also suffer. A recent study in the journal *Frontiers in Neuroscience* found that when the brain and body are well hydrated, memory recall speed improves. Researchers also found that proper hydration reduced anxiety, depression, and confusion.

- ✓ Carry a water bottle with you.
- ✓ Aim to drink 40 to 64 ounces of water daily.

2. Serve Up Some Brain Food

More than 5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease. This brain-wasting disease develops slowly over time. It causes memory loss, and leads to dementia. While genetics may be a factor, researchers believe dietary habits may hold clues to prevent it.

10 ways to drink more water:
tinyurl.com/nfoua4a

In a study of 104 people over age 80, they found that those with the healthiest brains ate more fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes, fish, and lean meats than those with diagnosed brain and memory problems. They also found that diets high in trans fats caused brain shrinkage and impaired memory.

- ✓ Eat more plant-based foods like broccoli, spinach, and dark-colored berries.
- ✓ Add more walnuts, almonds, and fish to your diet.
- ✓ If you're a vegetarian, take a vitamin B12 supplement to improve brain function.
- ✓ And avoid foods high in trans fats like fried foods, powdered mixes for cakes, brownies, and waffles, packaged cookies, biscuits, frozen or creamy drinks, and pre-made pie crust.

3. Rest Your Head

If you don't get enough sleep, you'll probably feel groggy and tired. And your reaction times may be slowed. In fact, one in three fatal car accidents are caused by a sleep-deprived driver, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Over time, lack of sleep also decreases insulin sensitivity. This raises the risk for diabetes and high blood pressure, which can both damage the brain. When your brain is short on sleep, its ability to store memories and eliminate toxins linked to certain brain diseases is compromised.

- ✓ Get plenty of rest and aim to get 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night for a healthy brain.

4. Be Social

You and your brain are better off in more ways than one when you're around family and friends. In a study published in the *Journal of the American Society on Aging*, researchers found that people who have good friendships and social ties are less likely than people who are lonely or isolated to develop brain diseases as they age. Positive social interaction helps reduce stress hormones in the brain and improve cognitive health.

- ✓ Make time to be social.
- ✓ Connect with family and friends.
- ✓ Participate in group activities.

Stock up on these healthy brain foods
tinyurl.com/pfspo2t



20 ways to fit exercise into your life
tinyurl.com/abha7c8

Tips for a good night's sleep:
tinyurl.com/phytmly



144 ways to be more social:
tinyurl.com/33zdvd8



Try these brain games:
tinyurl.com/2fhau8s

5. Exercise

If you have ever heard someone talk about a "runner's high," it's not just a myth. When you engage in exercise, endorphins are released in the brain that enhance mood and reduce pain. Studies show that exercise also reduces stress, anxiety, and feelings of depression. Getting a good workout can also boost your self-esteem, improve sleep, and aid in weight loss.

- ✓ Take a walk during your break.
- ✓ Go to the gym over lunch or after work.
- ✓ Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- ✓ Look for ways to be more active.
- ✓ Aim to exercise at least 30 to 60 minutes a day.

6. Practice Problem Solving

Solve a crossword. Complete a Sudoku puzzle. Play a game of chess or other game of strategy. When you keep your mind engaged by thinking and solving problems, your brain benefits. In a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, researchers found that when people participated in thinking games, they reduced their risk for Alzheimer's disease. Games and activities that require problem-solving skills strengthen connections in the brain that make it less vulnerable to damage.

- ✓ Play games of strategy.
- ✓ Solve crossword and Sudoku puzzles.
- ✓ Learn a new skill or take a class.
- ✓ Engage in activities that require you to solve problems.

When you take care of your brain, you'll be able to think faster, improve focus and attention, and remember more. Give your brain a daily workout with these healthy habits.

American Psychological Association.; UCLA Laboratory of Neuro Imaging.; American Association of Retired Persons.; Michigan State University.; Frontiers in Neuroscience.; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.; National Institutes of Health.; Journal of the American Society on Aging.; Journal of the American Medical Association.; American College of Sports Medicine.



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Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you practiced healthy brain habits.
3. Use the calendar to record the actions and choices you made to make healthy brain habits become a regular part of your life.
4. At the end of the month, total the number of days you practiced healthy brain habits. You must do this on at least 22 days this month to complete this challenge. Then keep up this practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	
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_____ Number of days this month I practiced healthy brain habits

_____ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking or biking

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Signature _____ Date _____

