

## Exercise Your Brain

As we grow older, we tend to grow wiser with each year. While our knowledge can continue to increase, our ability to make connections and process information can slow with age. The good news is that our daily food and fitness habits can make a difference in the aging processes.

Dr. Gerd Kempermann, M.D., a leading author of an aging study, says, “We can reduce the effects of aging on the brain with a sustained active and challenging life, even if this stimulation is only begun in middle age.”

Try these activities to help keep your brain healthy and sharp.

**Stay Physically Active.** Physical activity helps maintain good blood flow to the brain. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that most adults get 30 minutes of moderate activity most days, preferably every day. Short segments of physical activity such as three 10-minute walks count toward the goal.

Stimulate your brain by adding variety to your activities. Try a new activity, alternate activities throughout the week or take a new route when you walk or job. Routine activities don't challenge your brain, so mix it up a little.

There are many things that you can do to increase physical activity.

- Walk, jog, swim or do yoga.
- Join an exercise program or use a video online.
- Play a sport, pickleball, golf, or canoe.
- Walk the dog
- Plant and care for a garden.
- You can also dance; this was found to be the number one physical activity to decrease the onset of dementia.

Your brain can be exercised just like the rest of your body. Activities such as brain teasers challenge your brain to think in new ways and form new connections. There was a study done a few years that found cognitive training resulted in improved cognitive abilities that continued up to five years. Participants were trained in memory, reasoning, and speed process.

There are many things you can do to help your memory.

- Learn a new skill.
- Volunteer
- Spend time with family and friends.
- Use memory tools such as to-do lists, calendars, and notes.
- Put your wallet, keys, purse in the same place every day.
- Get plenty of rest.

Some other activities that you can do to keep your brain sharp include:

- Do crossword and jigsaw puzzles, word finds, or Sudoku puzzles.

- Play card games, board games and bingo.
- Read the newspaper, books, or magazine.
- Play card games, board games and bingo.
- Read books, magazines, and the newspaper.
- Paint, knit, draw, or do other crafts.
- Play a musical instrument or learn a foreign language.
- Stay up to date on technology but don't mindlessly scroll through your phone.

Source: NDSU Publication: Nourish Your Brain with a Healthful Diet.