

BRAIN HEALTH – WHY IT MATTERS

When you think about physical well-being, you might forget that brain health is a part of that. As we age, it is normal for changes in the brain to occur that disrupt mental function. More seriously, it can lead to a decline in memory, risk of Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia.

There are ways you can help maintain brain function in your everyday routine.

- **Stay mentally active** by stimulating your brain – Exercise your brain by completing a crossword or jigsaw puzzle, solving a Sudoku puzzle, drawing, painting, or crafting. Turn off Netflix, and choose a book you have been wanting to read.
- **Get plenty of exercise** – The benefits of exercise are numerous: exercise can increase blood flow to the brain, aid in lowering blood pressure, improve cholesterol levels, lower your risk of diabetes and reduce mental stress, all of which help your brain and your heart. Recent studies show that diabetes and even prediabetes increase the risk of Alzheimer's and other types of dementia. Therefore, preventing the development of diabetes or managing it well is one of the best things you can do to improve brain health.
- **Eat a healthy diet** – Your diet plays a large role in brain health. In fact, studies have shown that those who consume a Mediterranean diet are less likely to develop cognitive impairment and dementia. This includes fruits, vegetables, fish, nuts, olive oil and plant-based proteins. The rich source of omega-3 fatty acids that come from this diet not only improve heart health but increases mental focus and the slowing of cognitive decline in older adults. It's the true meaning of brain food!
- **Get plenty of sleep** – Getting seven to eight hours of consecutive sleep per night can play an important role in your brain health. Sleep without interruption "gives your brain the time to consolidate and store your memories effectively," according to the Mayo Clinic.
- **Be social** – Having relationships and remaining socially active is not only helpful for your emotional well-being, but it has been associated with a lower risk of dementia, as well as lowering blood pressure and a longer life expectancy.

Excerpted from article on the Wespah Healthline website