



TALKING ABOUT BRAIN HEALTH & AGING

THE BASICS

Aging well depends on your genes, lifestyle choices, and environment. Even if you're healthy, brain changes as you age may lead to increased challenges with multitasking, paying attention, and recalling words. However, most of us—at any age—can learn new things and improve skills, which can be important for maintaining our independence.

PROTECTING YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Good overall health may help to maintain good brain health. These tips may help you stay active and healthy, physically and mentally.

- Eat or drink less sugar, salt, and solid fat
- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Choose lean meats, fish, or poultry
- Control portion sizes
- Choose low- or non-fat dairy
- Drink adequate fluids
- Make physical activity a part of your routine
- Seek exercise guidance from a health care provider
- Join programs that teach exercise safety
- Volunteer or work
- Join a social club or gather with friends
- Try programs at local community centers
- Get 7-8 hours of sleep every night



RESOURCES

Administration on Community Living (ACL):

- [Brain Health Webpage](#)
- [Brain Injuries Fact Sheet](#)
- [Medicine, Age, and Your Brain Fact Sheet](#)
- [Eldercare Locator](#) (find local supports/services)

National Institute on Aging (NIA):

- [What is Brain Health? Campaign](#)
- [Health Information Website](#)
- [Cognitive Health](#)
- [Go4Life® Physical Activity Campaign](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- [Physical Activity Webpage](#)
- [Health Information for Older Adults](#)
- [Basics About Sleep](#)
- [Healthy Brain Initiative](#)

Other Federal Agencies:

- [NINDS Mind Your Risks Campaign](#)
- [NCI's Smokefree.gov](#)
- [EPA's Guide to Air Quality and Your Health](#)
- [USDA's ChooseMyPlate.gov](#)
- [NIAAA's Alcohol & Your Health Webpage](#)

BRAIN HEALTH RISKS

Genetic risks to brain health are inherited, but the lifestyle and environmental factors you control may be changed to help overcome some of these risks and help maintain brain health.

Accidents

THE RISK: As we get older, the risk of falls and other accidents that can cause brain injury increases.

REDUCE IT: Exercise to improve balance, wear safety belts and helmets, get an eye exam, make sure your home is safe, and get enough sleep.

Alcohol

THE RISK: Consuming alcohol can impair communication among brain cells and affect your balance, coordination, memory, and emotions.

REDUCE IT: Older adults should be especially careful because medicines can interact with alcohol. Either don't consume it or follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020, which describes "moderation" as up to one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men.

Smoking and Related Risks

THE RISK: Smoking and other pollutants can affect your health, including your heart and lungs.

REDUCE IT: If you smoke, quit. Consider how to limit your exposure to air pollution from fires (including fireplaces and candles), vehicles, and industrial areas.

Medicines

THE RISK: Some medicines—on their own or when combined with other things—can affect the way your brain functions.

REDUCE IT: Talk to your health care providers about all prescription and over-the-counter drugs you take. Follow instructions and take medicines safely.

Health Conditions

THE RISK: Conditions like heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, and sleep problems can affect brain health.

REDUCE IT: Manage your cholesterol and blood pressure, exercise, eat healthily, and get recommended health screenings. If you smoke, quit. If you drink alcohol, limit consumption. Get enough sleep and seek help for sleep problems.

WHERE TO BEGIN

There are many things that can affect brain health. Start with one small step in the right direction:

- Schedule a health screening or physical exam
- Review your medicines with your health care provider
- Add one daily serving of vegetables to your diet
- Start a food, activity, or health journal
- Find your community center's activity schedule
- If you are a Medicare beneficiary, schedule an Annual Wellness Visit

REGULAR HEALTH SCREENINGS MAY IDENTIFY WAYS TO IMPROVE BRAIN HEALTH.

