



Building Brain-Healthy Habits



January 2026

Healthy habits for your brain



10 HEALTHY HABITS FOR YOUR BRAIN

We will focus on these
brain-healthy habits.



Control
Your Blood
Pressure



Manage
Diabetes



Maintain a
Healthy
Weight



Be Smoke-
Free



Get
Moving



Eat Right



Sleep Well



Challenge
Your Mind



Stay in
School



Protect
Your Head

Healthy living benefits the brain



Learn more at alz.org/USPOINTER



- The first large-scale, randomized controlled trial of its kind in the U.S.
- Showed that a structured healthy lifestyle program combining exercise, healthy diet, cognitive engagement, and health monitoring can protect cognitive function.

Importance of Brain Health



What is brain health?



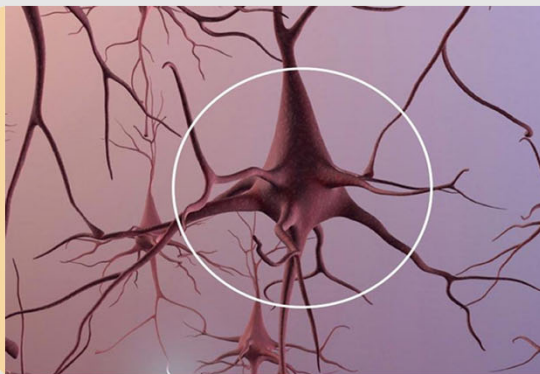
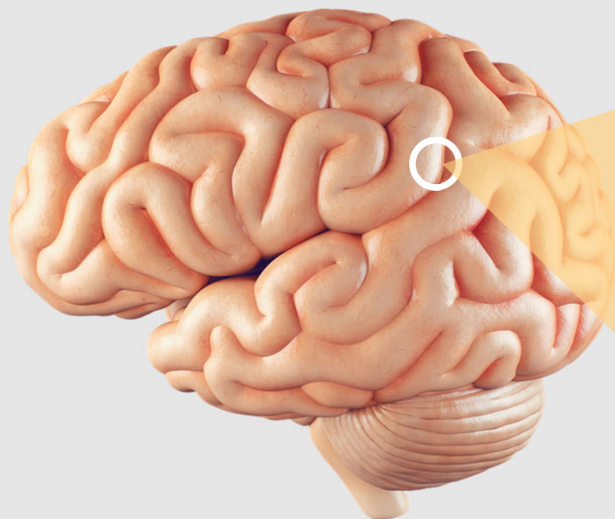
**Memory
and thinking**



**Social-emotional,
behavioral and
mental health**

**Sensory and
movement**

How does the brain work?

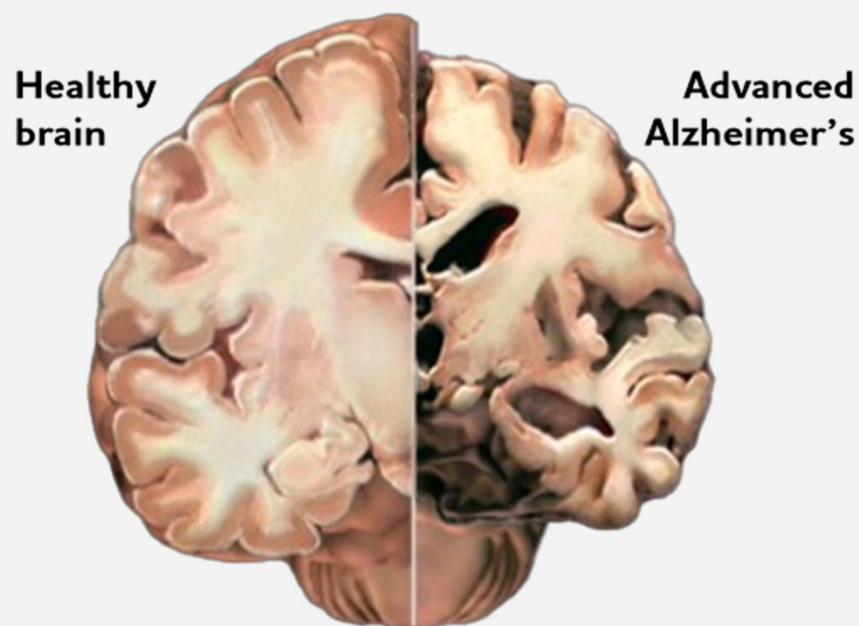


Neurons (nerve cells) are essential to all human activity.



100 billion neurons connect at more than 100 trillion points to create a “neuron forest.”

Alzheimer's Disease and the brain



Brain changes can start *20 years or more*
before symptoms of dementia are experienced

Understanding dementia



Cognitive decline

Cognitive decline refers to changes in memory and thinking that are worsening over time. Just as with our physical abilities, some cognitive decline is expected as we age.

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI)

MCI is an early stage of memory loss or other cognitive ability loss (such as language or visual/ spatial perception) in individuals who maintain the ability to independently perform most activities of daily living.

Dementia

Dementia is a loss of memory and other thinking abilities that are severe enough to interfere with daily life.

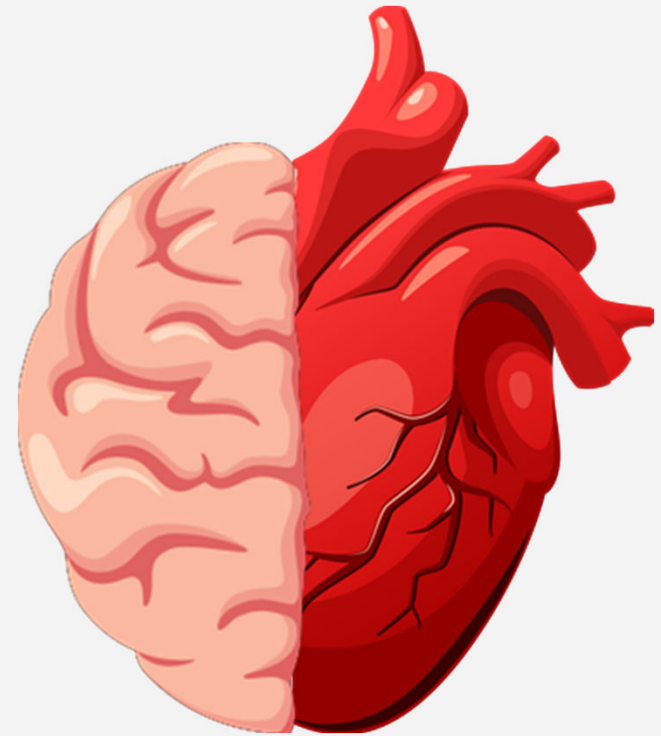
Dementia is not a normal part of aging.

The brain-heart connection



Our hearts and brains are closely connected.

- The heart pumps blood to the brain.
- The blood provides oxygen and other nutrients to nourish the brain.
- What's good for our hearts is good for our brains.



When is the best time to start thinking about brain health?



It's never too early or too late to take action for brain health.

Health Conditions and the Brain



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Weight



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Be Smoke-
Free

What's good for the heart is good for the brain

Control Your Blood Pressure



Blood pressure should be less than 130/80 mmHG.

Manage Diabetes



Healthy eating, exercise and medications can be effective in managing diabetes.

Maintain a Healthy Weight



Talk with a health care provider about what is right for you.

Be Smoke-Free



Quitting can be hard! 1-800-QUIT-NOW or local resources can help.

Brain-Healthy Habits



Get
Moving



Eat Right



Sleep Well



Benefits of brain-healthy habits



Get Moving

Exercise improves brain function by increasing blood and oxygen flow. It also helps improve connections among brain cells.



Eat Right

Improved nutrition is connected to better brain health. The MIND diet provides optimal nutrition for the brain.



Sleep Well

Deep sleep may help “wash away” a build up of proteins in the brain that are a risk to brain health.

Get moving



Aerobics, strength training and stretching are all part of a balanced exercise routine.

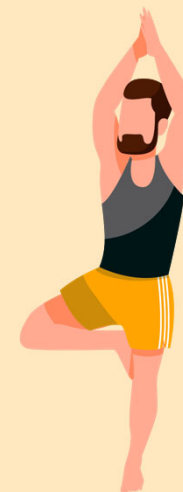
Aim for:



Aerobic exercise:
30-35 minutes of moderate-to-intense aerobic activity four times a week



Strength training:
15-20 minutes, two times a week



Stretching and balance exercises:
10-15 minutes, two times a week

Tips to get moving



Get Moving

Think about something fun and new you want to try.



Link it to something fun.



Ask friends to join you.



Track your progress.



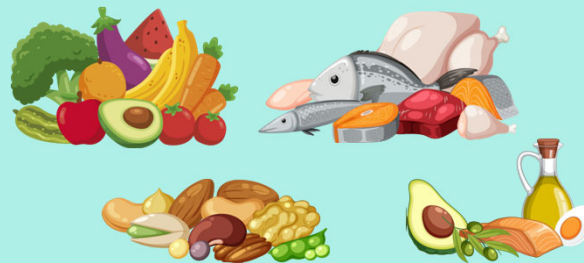
alz.org/exercisetracker

Eat right



Eat Right

The MIND diet
provides optimal
nutrition for brain
health.



Aim to regularly eat:

- Leafy Green Vegetables, 1 serving/day
- Other Vegetables, 1 serving/day
- Berries, 5 servings/week
- Whole Grains, 3 servings/day
- Poultry (white meat, skinless), 2 servings/week
- Fish (not fried), 1 serving/week
- Beans/Legumes, 3 servings/week
- Nuts, 5 servings/week
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil, 2 servings/day



Limit:

- Red & Processed Meats
- Butter/Margarine
- Cheese
- Fried Foods
- Sweets

alz.org/foodtracker

Tips to eat right



Eat Right

Focus on adding more healthy foods. What can you add?



- Healthy afternoon snacks
- Vegetables on pasta or rice
- Fruit along with dessert

Find healthier foods you can swap in. What new foods are you willing to try?



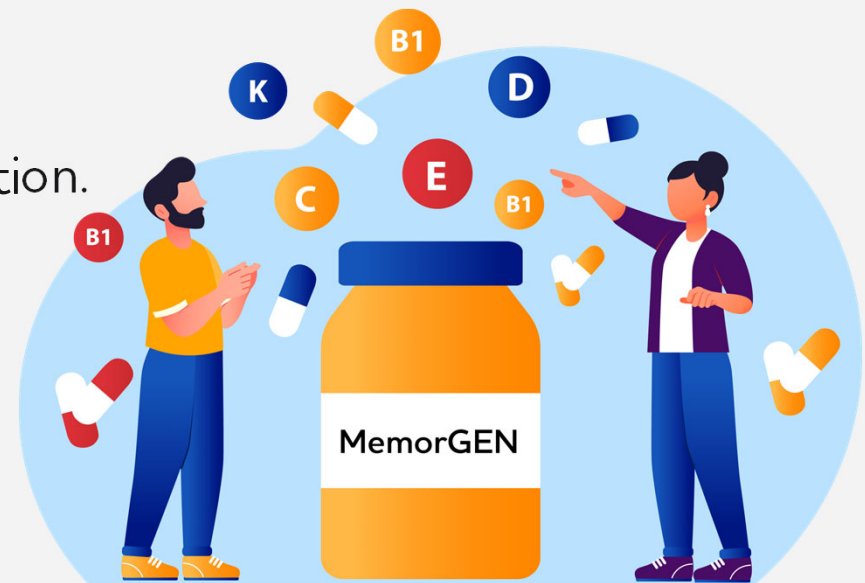
- Olive oil
- Herbs
- Leaner meats
- Whole grains

A note about vitamins and supplements



Many vitamins and supplements claim to improve thinking and memory.

- Many are developed with limited or no regulation.
- They may interact with other medications.
- Overall evidence doesn't show that vitamins and supplements reduce dementia risk.

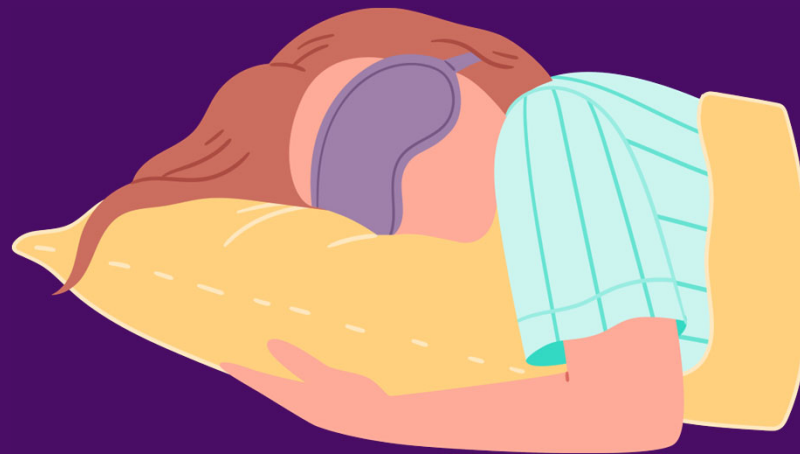


A healthy diet remains the best way to promote brain health.

Sleep well



Quality sleep allows you to go through the sleep cycle, including deep sleep, and this is valuable for brain health.

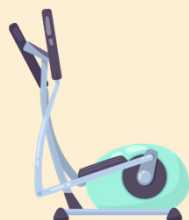


Adults should aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep.

Tips to sleep well



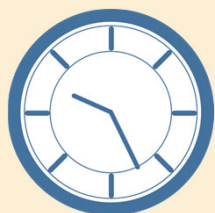
Avoid caffeine
later in the
day.



Be physically
active during
the day.



Minimize naps.



Keep a
regular sleep
schedule.



Cooler
temperatures
promote sleep.



Minimize
noise.



Block light
with black out
curtains or
masks.



Protect your
sleep from
disruptions.

Brain-Healthy Habits



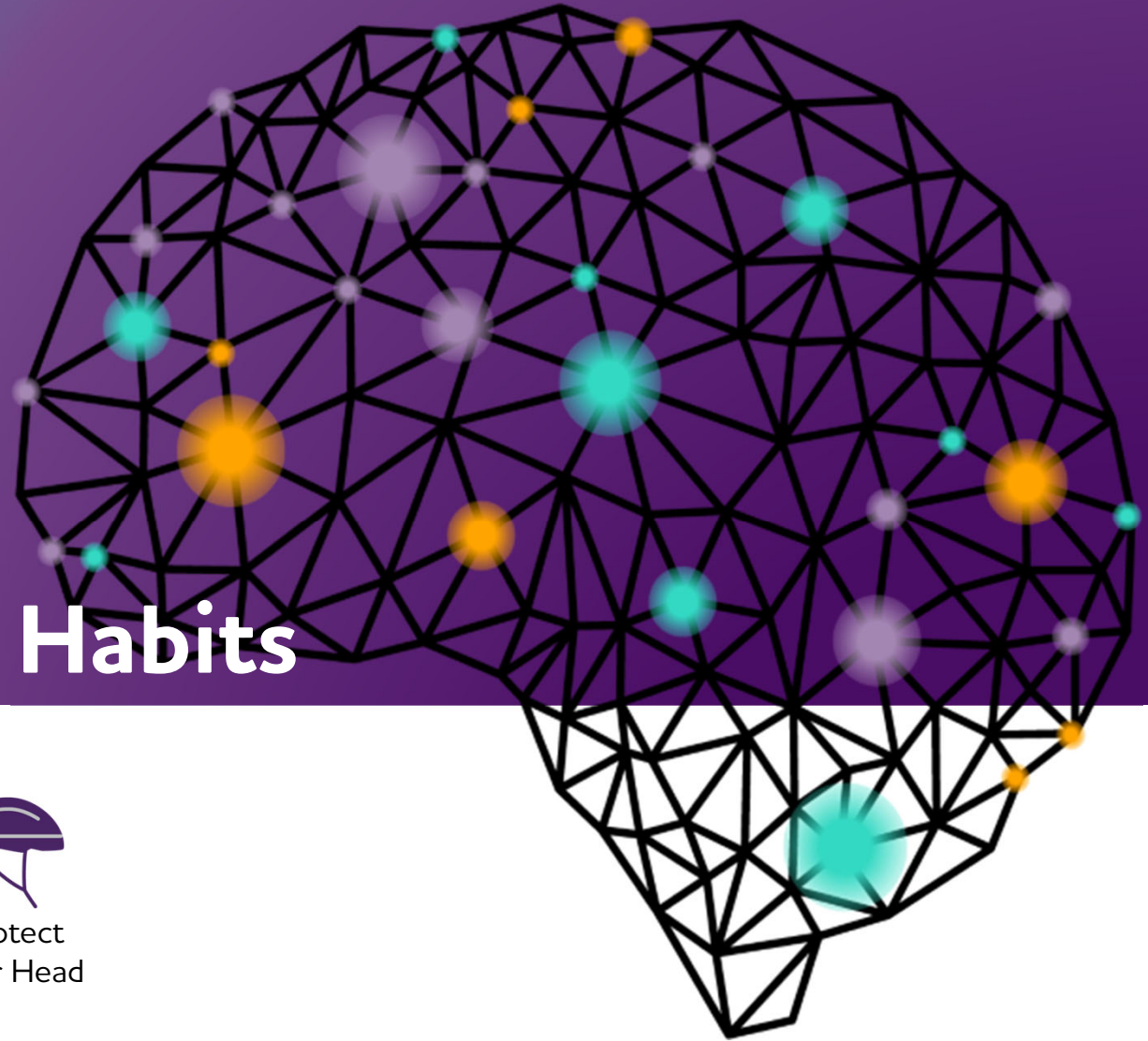
Challenge
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Protect
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Keep your brain working hard



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Challenge
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Cognitive
engagement
builds new
connections in
our brains.

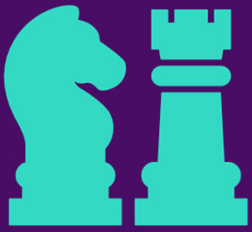


- Learning builds up a “cognitive reserve”.
- The more years of formal education, the better.
- Cognitive engagement encourages bloodflow to the brain and more connections between brain cells.

Tips to challenge your mind



Challenge
Your Mind



Try strategy
games



Do
puzzles



Learn a
language



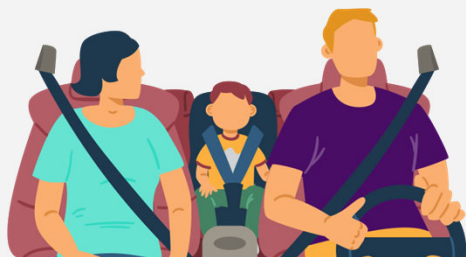
Explore a new
hobby

Get out of your comfort zone and make your brain work hard.

Prevent head injuries



Head injuries, including concussions, can cause short- and long-term problems.



Make sure everyone in your vehicle is wearing a seatbelt.



Wear a helmet to minimize injuries while bike riding, skating, skiing, or similar activities.



Organize your space to minimize the risk of falling. Keep safety in mind for home projects.

Key points



All Ages Welcome!



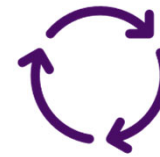
Nurture the healthy habits you adopted in childhood, or start new ones at any stage of life.

More Habits = More Benefits



Include a variety of healthy habits.

Consistency is Key!



For these habits to make a difference, they need to be done on a regular basis!

Tips for Success



Time to build an action plan



Set a
goal



Define your
actions



Overcome
obstacles



Set a
timeline

Healthy habits for your brain



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What can I do for my
brain health **now**?



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Additional resources and support



24/7 Helpline
800.272.3900



Local Resources

- Find your chapter ([alz.org/findus](https://www.alz.org/findus))
- Support groups
- Alzheimer's Association Community Resource Finder ([alz.org/crf](https://www.alz.org/crf))



Online ([alz.org](https://www.alz.org))

[alz.org/care](https://www.alz.org/care)
[alz.org/safety](https://www.alz.org/safety)
[alz.org/driving](https://www.alz.org/driving)

ALZConnected®
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My ALZ Journey™
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Education Programs

([alz.org/education](https://www.alz.org/education))

In-person, online and virtual