

Keeping Your Brain Healthy

Aging means we have an increased risk of developing brain diseases like Alzheimer's and dementia. While it's impossible to totally prevent these afflictions, studies have shown that developing healthy lifestyles in our later years may decrease the risk of serious brain diseases. The good news is the first steps to being proactive about your mental health simply require you to eat right and keep your mind occupied.

It all starts with a healthy lifestyle:

- Plan healthy meals each day. Follow the MyPlate method of meal planning by making half your plate covered with fruits and vegetables.
- If you have diabetes, choose low-carb veggies for half your plate and include a serving of fruit in addition to the food on your plate.
- Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables in all the colors of the rainbow. Each color represents different plant chemicals that give you specific health benefits. To help improve memory and brain health, eat blue and purple colored fruits and vegetables every day including blueberries, black raspberries, eggplant, purple cabbage and plums.
- Finish your healthy plate with one-fourth of the plate covered with a serving of a whole grain, one-fourth of the plate covered with a lean protein source, and an additional serving from the dairy food group.
- Stay physically active. Staying active helps our muscles stay strong and pumps blood throughout the body, taking oxygen and nutrients to the brain.
- Stay mentally active. Research has shown that adults who participate in mentally challenging activities like crossword puzzles and brain games lower their risk for or delay the development of dementia.
- No matter what your age, learn something new. Learn a new language, try a new recipe, or take a class. Using our brain for something new or different helps to keep it sharp.

We aren't promised a long, healthy life, but living a healthy lifestyle will help get us there.