

[IMAGE]

Nourish Your Brain

The aging process takes enough of a toll on the human body without having the mind share the same fate. As we age, the brain is susceptible to various degenerative processes, from simple lapses in memory and concentration to outright cognitive decline or Alzheimer's. Fortunately, there are simple ways to keep your brain healthy into your golden years. Here are three brain boosters to keep you on your mental toes:

Feed It: Your brain needs sound nutrition to function optimally; if you don't believe it, compare your memory and concentration after eating a balanced breakfast vs. only having a coffee - or skipping breakfast altogether. On a more physiological level, consider that the outer membrane of brain cells require a constant supply of fatty acids. That's where omega-3s can help. Choline, a B vitamin present in high amounts in eggs, broccoli and other cruciferous vegetables, wheat germ and tofu, may also be important for brain neurotransmitter function while benefiting mood and mental performance.

brain nutrition - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark *Exercise It:* Research suggests consistent physical activity can help people maintain memory and cognitive function as they age. According to at least one study, the exercise necessary to achieve brain benefits involved simple activities such as walking, gardening, cooking and cleaning. In fact, most of the elderly adults participating in the study did not exercise in the traditional format (weights, cardio, etc.) or otherwise work out vigorously. Of course, working out won't hurt your brain, either. In fact, another recent study showed that after a year of lifting weights twice a week, elderly women performed significantly better on tests of mental processing compared to women who participated in a balancing and toning program instead.

Challenge It: When you don't move furniture occasionally and clean under and behind it, what happens? Dust accumulates (along with all manner of other things). In a sense, if you don't challenge your brain, stagnation ("dust") can set in, leading to all sorts of problems over time. The solution is simple, research suggests: challenge your brain. How? Try crossword puzzles, chess, word problems or other strategies to keep your brain alert and engaged.

And try not to let technological conveniences (calculators are a great example) replace using your mind to figure things out. The moral is simple: Take care of your mind and your mind will do the same for you.

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