

[IMAGE]

## A Better Heart = A Better Brain

By Editorial Staff

You can worry about your health when you're older, right? Not so fast. Research suggests maintaining a healthy heart when you're in your 20s can give you a healthy brain when you're in your 40s – good news for arguably the two most important organs in your body. According to a study published in *Neurology*, people with better heart health scores at the start of the study (when subjects were in their early 20s) had higher brain volume (an indication of overall cognitive capacity) three decades later.

Scores were assessed at the beginning and end of the study based on subjects' adherence to the American Heart Association's "[Life's Simple 7](#)," a heart health protocol that emphasizes seven heart-healthy lifestyle factors: maintaining healthy blood pressure, controlling cholesterol, reducing blood sugar, staying active, eating better, losing weight, and stopping smoking. Participants were scored at the beginning of the study and 25 years later, and received initial and follow-up exams (every 2-5 years) to assess blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, and general diet / exercise habits. Brain scans were utilized at the 25-year mark to assess brain volume.

So, how can you keep your heart healthy at any age? Check out these [five simple suggestions](#) courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

1. Control blood pressure
2. Eat healthy foods and limit alcohol
3. Avoid type 2 diabetes
4. Don't smoke
5. Stay active

And here are [suggestions](#) from the Mayo Clinic to help optimize brain function:

1. Physical exercise
2. Food and nutrition
3. Control health risks

4. Sleep and relaxation
5. Mental fitness
6. Social interaction

Talk to your doctor to learn more about heart health, brain health and how to keep both optimized for a lifetime.

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