

Brain Fitness

We often hear the phrase “use it or lose it” in reference to brain fitness. With the growing awareness of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, there is greater concern for maintaining brain function and avoiding disease. This tip sheet provides information and resources to get you headed in the right direction towards a healthy brain.

The four key ingredients to a healthy brain:

1. **Proper Diet:** What’s good for the heart is good for the brain. Eat a variety of vitamin-rich foods high in B vitamins, folate, antioxidants, and low in fat and cholesterol.
 - Antioxidant rich foods include **fish** such as salmon or mackerel and dark-skinned **fruits and vegetables** such as spinach, broccoli, beets, prunes, raisins and berries.
 - HDL (or “good”) cholesterol may help protect brain cells. Try to stick to mono- and polyunsaturated fats, such as olive or vegetable oils, avocado, or nuts. Avoid trans-fats (sometimes called partially hydrogenated oils) which can be damaging to healthy heart and brain function.

2. **Physical Exercise:** Physical exercise helps to maintain good blood flow to the brain and can reduce certain risk factors for Alzheimer’s disease.
 - Exercise should be done regularly for around 30 minutes per day, 5 days per week.
 - Forms of exercise may include walking, bicycling, gardening, swimming, or yoga.
 - Exercise does not have to be a big deal or done all at one time. Think of small ways you can incorporate exercise into your normal daily routine.
 - **Talk with your doctor about how to start an appropriate nutrition or exercise program.

3. **Social Activity:** People who engage in regular social activities may maintain better brain health. Social activities come in all forms. Get involved in local library programs, faith community groups, the Red Hat Society, or activities at your local senior center. The Alzheimer’s Association offers classes for people with mild memory loss that can provide social activity along with mental stimulation.

4. **Mental Activity:** Keeping the brain active *may* help to build new connections and cells in your brain, protecting you from mental decline. *See the resources below for ways to stay mentally active.*

Websites with free online activities and games:

- www.braingle.com
- www.fitbrains.com
- <https://aarp.brainhq.com>
- www.jigzone.com
- http://cognitivelabs.com/game_list.htm

Websites with activities and games for a fee:

- www.mybraintrainer.com
- www.happy-neuron.com
- www.lumosity.com
- www.positscience.com

Books:

For those with healthy memory to those with mild memory loss:

- *Dental Floss for the Mind* – by Michel Noir and M.D., Ph.D. Bernard Croisile (2005)
- *Get Your Brain in the Fast Lane* – by Michel Noir and M.D., Ph.D. Bernard Croisile (2007)
- *365 Exercises for the Mind.* – by Pierre Berloquin (1998)
- *Exercises for the Whole Brain: Neuron-Builders to Stimulate and Entertain Your Visual, Math and Executive-Planning Skills* – by Allen D. Bragdon & Leonard F. Fellows
- *The Sharper Mind* – by Fred B. Chernow
- *Improving Your Memory: How to Remember What You're Starting to Forget* – by J. Fogler & L. Stern
- *The Memory Bible: An Innovative Strategy for Keeping Your Brain Young* – by Gary Small

For those with memory loss:

- *The Best Friends Book of Alzheimer's Activities* -- by Virginia Bell, David Troxel, Tonya M. Cox, and Robin Hamon (2004)
- *Alzheimer's Activities that Stimulate the Mind* – by Emilia Bazan-Salazar (2005)

St. Louis Area Resources for Brain Fitness

Alzheimer's Association – Greater Missouri Chapter

www.alz.org/greatermissouri

800.272.3900

- The Greater Missouri Chapter offers mentally stimulating programs for people with mild memory loss to help them maintain an active lifestyle and connect with others. The chapter library and family resource center has books and videos with activity ideas available to check out.

The Brain Fitness Gym

www.thebrainfitnessgym.com

info@thebrainfitnessgym.com

314.779.1373

President: Don Veenstra

- *The Brain Fitness Gym's* mission is to teach and coach brain exercise activities designed to promote a Brain Healthy Life-Style that leads to people Aging Well.

The Memory Practice

www.thememorypractice.com

314.726.5105

Director: Dr. Pascale Michelon

- *The Memory Practice's* mission is to help adults keep their brains fit. Paper-and-pencil brain exercises are offered that stimulate the major brain functions: Memory, Attention, Verbal skills, Visual and Spatial skills and Reasoning skills.