

# Brain Health

Your brain can also become weak as you age if you do not maintain its health.



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Although there is not physical way to work out your brain, there are some mental workouts you can perform to keep your brain strong and healthy.

### MENTAL HEALTH IS IMPORTANT

Although you may have good mental health, you can never be too careful as you continue to age. Mental health disorders such as

ensure that your brain stays healthy as you age.

The best way to work out your brain is to keep your mind active. Challenging yourself with learning a new skill or taking in music, theater or another creative activity will get your mind moving and working.

### UNHEALTHY HABITS

Your brain is effected by every-

healthy life away from harmful substances such as cigarettes, alcohol and junk food.

Being active is a great way to keep your mind and body healthy whether it's walking through your local park, taking a tai chi or yoga class or even just stretching every day for 10 minutes. Get your body moving and kick away those unhealthy habits and you'll lead a long, bright healthy life.

and well being.

### ACTIVITIES

Some other activities you can do to keep your brain active are puzzles, brain games on your phone or using your memory. Drawing a map of your town from memory is a good challenge for your brain. Include major streets, landmarks and major sights in town.

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# Exercise to Stay Strong

As you age and get older it is important to make sure you keep your body healthy and strong to prevent injuries.

Exercising may seem a little intimidating but if you know what you are doing then it can be fun and super beneficial to your health.

## KEEP YOUR LEGS STRONG

To help prevent falls, trips or injuries as you age it is important to make sure you are working out your body keeping it strong and healthy. Although it may be unsafe for you to go to a gym during a pandemic that should not limit your ability to workout. There are simple leg workouts that you can perform at home in your living room and backyard safely.

- **Chair squats.** Position your body in front of a chair with your hands straight out in front of you. While keeping your legs shoulder length apart perform squats on the chair. For a harder workout hover and hold your legs over the chair and count to 5 during each squat.

- **Side leg raise.** Stand behind a chair with your feet shoulder width apart. Slowly lift one leg to the side while keeping your back straight and eyes staring forward. Hold your leg in the air for 15 to 30



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seconds and slowly set it down. Repeat for the opposite leg.

- **Toe lifts.** While using a chair or counter for this exercise, stand with your feet together and stand up on your toes as high as you can. Slowly

lower yourself and repeat this about 10 times.

## STRETCHING IS IMPORTANT

There are other ways to get your daily fitness in and one of those is stretching.

Stretching helps give you greater movement in joints and improving your posture. Stretching also helps to release muscle tension and soreness. Over time, stretching will help your body just as much as working out would.

Seniors should try and stretch a major muscle group for at least 10 minutes, twice a week, if not more. These exercises paired with other healthy lifestyles will help your body stay strong and prevent possible falls in the future.

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# Good Nutrition Matters

It's important to watch what you eat and to maintain a healthy diet. This can be very crucial as you age because poor nutrition can have a great impact on your everyday health and life.

The National Council on aging shares advice and tips on a healthy life and healthy nutrition.

**IMPORTANCE OF NUTRITION**  
The National Council on Aging says

poor nutrition increases your risk for serious health problems. When you are sick, your body needs extra nutrition to heal. If you don't eat right, your body will have to get the nutrition from somewhere breaking down nutrients in your muscles to use as fuel.

The NCOA says malnutrition effects your body by:

- Making it harder to recover from surgery and illness.
- Make it more difficult to heal wounds.
- Increase risk for infection and risks for falls.
- Decrease strength needed to take care of yourself.

Read the Warning Signs  
You won't feel the effects of poor

nutrition overnight. Sometimes, it will take a while to see that you are getting the proper nutrients your body needs. As you get older, the signs may become more troubling for you than in a younger adult or child. Talk to your health care provider if you show any of the warning signs provided by NCOA.

- Eating poorly.
- If chewing and swallowing becomes difficult.
- Taking multiple medicines to feel normal.
- Unplanned weight loss

**STEPS TO GOOD NUTRITION**

The first step to a healthy diet is to know what nutrients to look for. NCOA

says your plate should like a rainbow. Bright, colored foods are the best choice. Your plates should include all of the following:

- Lean protein (lean meats, seafood, eggs and beans).
- Fruits and Vegetables (orange, red, green and purple).
- Whole grains ( brown rice, whole wheat pasta).
- Low-fat dairy (milk and its alternatives).

Choose foods that are high in fiber and low in sodium or salt. Vitamins such as vitamin D are important as you age. Making sure you eat the right items will help you lead a safe and healthy lifestyle and can prolong the effects of aging.

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# Plan Before you Drive

If you or a loved one have aching pains and stiffness but are still able to drive it doesn't hurt to take extra steps to make sure you keep yourself and others on the road safe.

Before you drive take some extra initiative to know where and when you are going somewhere. Being a safe driver will help you remain a drive for a longer period of time without having to rely on your loved ones or a service to get you where you need to go.

### BE A SAFE DRIVER

Being a safe driver is knowing when it's best for you to drive and knowing when you shouldn't drive. If you have trouble seeing then maybe driving at night or during a storm isn't the right choice for you.

If you have concerns about your ability to drive you can get it checked by a trained [professional or even an occupational therapist.

Taking a defensive driving course to freshen up your memory or even to update yourself on the new rules of the road is a good way to be a safe driver and to keep yourself on the road/.

### IS IT TIME TO QUIT DRIVING?

As you get older you will



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eventually reach an age where you are unfit to drive a vehicle. This may occur sooner in some adults than others. Medications can also affect your driving skills. There are some medications that can make you sluggish and react

slower than you usually do. This is very dangerous if you drive constantly because it can affect the way you drive and may put you at risk of an accident.

When do you know it's time for you or your loved ones to

put the keys down?

- Multiple car crashes or near miss incidents.
- Multiple or more traffic tickets during a short period of time.
- Comments from other such as neighbors or family

members.

- Experiencing anxiety when it's time to get behind the wheel.

If you or a loved one is experiencing any of these difficulties then it may be time to put down the keys.

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# STEADI: Fall Prevention Basics

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says falls are common and costly, especially among Americans age 65 and older.

The CDC's STEADI initiative or Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths and Injuries initiative shares for things you or a loved one can do to prevent falls.

### TALK OPENLY WITH HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

Falling in your home isn't something you should keep to yourself. There is nothing you should be embarrassed about if an accident happens. The CDC's STEADI initiative says to tell a provider right away if you fall, worry about falling or feel unsteady.

Your doctor may review all the medicines you take as over-time some medicines can change and create different effects in your body.

### EXERCISE DAILY

Exercising is a great way to help prevent yourself from falling over time. Keeping your body healthy and moving decreases the chances of falling as you continue to get older. Look into exercises that will improve your balance and make your legs stronger. Stretching daily is another way to do minimal exercise that will benefit you in the long run.

Check Eyes and Feet



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Getting your eyes checked at least one year is important to prevent damage or catch damage such as cataracts or glaucoma in its early stages. The CDC's STEADI initiative says along with getting your eyes fixed, you should also have

your feet checked once a year, discuss proper footwear and ask whether seeing a foot specialist is advised.

### MAKE YOUR HOME SAFER

Making your home safer for yourself is probably the most

important way you can prevent falls. Remove items that may trip you over such as shoes, clothes, cords or any other items that may lie on the floor.

Use double-sided tape to stick small rugs and carpets to

the ground.

Lastly, adding handrails on all staircases and in your restroom next to your shower and next to the toilet are good prevention methods that may save your body and life in the future.

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# Trend Alert: Tai Chi

The Tai Chi for Health institute, or TCHI, says tai chi is an ancient Chinese tradition that, today is practiced as a graceful form of exercise. It involves a series of movement performed in a slow, focused manner.

**TAI CHI PRINCIPLES**

Your body loses balance as you age making it more difficult for you to keep yourself up, perform task and increases the risk of falls. Tai chi's core principles focus on weight transference, movement control and the integration of mind and body. The exercise is safe for all ages to perform because it is so slow and low impact.

**MOVEMENT CONTROL**

Tai chi is a slow, low impact workout that will help you minimize the stress on muscles and joints. The movements help to strengthen internal muscles such as the deep stabilizers that support the spine. The slow movements in tai chi help to calm the mind.

**WEIGHT TRANSFERENCE**

As you train in tai chi, you will learn to mind each step and take notice of the weight you put into each step. This will help to improve your



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mobility and decrease the risk of falling.

**Integration of Mind and Body**

TCHI says tai chi is an internal art, which stresses the integration and balance of mind and body. You will learn to focus, calm your mind and loosen and relax joints and lig-

aments. TCHI results show that being confident in your body and its ability will prevent falls.

**EXTRA BENEFITS**

Some other added benefits from practicing tai chi is instability, which involves issues such as body way, low mobility and postural instability.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says tai chi also addresses gait problems by teaching correct movement of lower limbs. These benefits will help you properly move and transfer body weight as you walk and most importantly keep your lower body healthy and strong

as you age.

Tai chi also helps and teaches its students to maintain a relaxed posture. Tai chi can be one of the best workouts you or your loved one can perform. Investigate what is right for you and your body before committing to a goal or certain workout.

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# Senior Drivers

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says one in six drivers in the United States are 65 years or older and that older drivers are more than twice as likely to report having a medical problem making it difficult for them to travel.

There are some steps you can take to ensure you or your family member can travel safely.

**SEE YOUR DOCTOR**

Talk to your doctor about medications or your body if you have any doubts of you or your loved one's ability to drive themselves. Talk to them about any pains you may be experiencing while driving. If you are experiencing lower stiffness, pain or arthritis, then look into getting vehicles with the hand controls for both the gas and brake pedals.

**SIGHT PROBLEMS**

Note that your vision can worsen with age and if you are slowly noticing your vision becoming worse than before then see your doctor about glasses and procedures.

The CDC says trouble seeing can make it more difficult for you to read street or traffic signs clearly. Glare from



oncoming headlights at night can also affect your vision ahead of you on the road. If you are 65 or older, the CDC recommends you see your eye doctor every year.

**HEARING PROBLEMS**

Hearing can also be affect-

ed as you get older. Trouble hearing can make it more difficult for you to hear horns, sirens from emergency vehicles and even noises that may be coming from your own vehicle.

Have your ears checked by your local doctor every three

years if you are 50 years or older.

**OTHER TRAVEL METHODS**

If you or your loved has trouble traveling and are not able to drive or travel on their own then there are other

ways they can get where they need to go.

Some cities provide a travel service specifically for seniors for a monthly fee. Religious groups in some communities also offer volunteers who will drive you wherever you need to go.

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