

# STRATEGIES FOR BRAIN HEALTH

## PHYSICAL EXERCISE

### Facts

- Exercise has been proven to grow connections and strengthen communication between brain cells.
- Consistent aerobic activities that increase the heart rate create the best improvement in brain function and structure.
- Exercise has shown to reduce the risk of getting Parkinson's disease by 30%.

### Recommendations

- Ten-to-fifteen minutes of physical activity, such as gardening or housework, can make a difference in brain health.
- Optimal brain health is achieved with at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise five to seven days per week. Create a plan to increase exercise goals each week.
- Read the website document Exercise for more information.

## BRAIN EXERCISE

### Facts

- It is necessary to use the brain to strengthen connections between nerve cells.
- Brain health improves when in a stimulating environment.
- Just like muscles, the brain needs to be challenged and stimulated with complex situations to survive and thrive.
- Nerve cells that fire together wire together. Practicing skills improves the wiring, but after achieving proficiency remember that the brain will again become bored. As stated above, the brain needs challenge and stimulation, so continue to strive for higher levels of achievement as skills are mastered.

## Recommendations

- Engage in positive social interactions, including meeting new people.
- Dust off the bucket list and experience new activities and adventures.
- Volunteer at a school or local not-for-profit. Help is always needed and appreciated, and it benefits the brain.
- Continue to learn. The opportunities are endless; check local colleges, libraries, bookstores, museums, and senior centers.
- Engage in games, such as hopscotch, LEGOs, and Yahtzee; the list is endless.
- Practice and repeat positive activities.
- Add complexity to skills already mastered.
- Engage in mental training exercises like mindfulness – being consciously aware of the moment, including all sensory input and the emotions surrounding it.

## SLEEP

### Facts

- During sleep, all the input from the day is sorted and stored in the brain, and chemicals that allow nerve cells to communicate are replenished.

### Recommendation

- Read the website document Sleep Hygiene for more information.

## DIET

### Facts

- The Mediterranean diet is brain-healthy because of its protective effect on blood vessels.
- Making changes to the diet can take time. Choose an area to improve and once achieved, move on to the next one. Having a plan with goals to meet provides the best chance of success at improving the diet.

### Recommendation

- Read the website document Mediterranean Diet for more information.

## HYDRATION

### Facts

- The body is 60% water and needs to be replenished regularly.
- Water is the vehicle which transports oxygen and glucose, the body's energy source, to the brain.
- Alcohol and caffeine are dehydrating.

### Recommendation

- Read the website document Hydration for more information.