



Exercise: Good for the Brain

You've heard that memory, as well as the ability to think and process information quickly, diminishes with age. You know the feeling. You come face to face with a longtime acquaintance and her name sticks on the tip of your tongue. Or, you suddenly draw a blank when dialing a telephone number you've known for years.

Many of us experience memory glitches and accept these occurrences as a normal sign of aging that will only worsen over time. However, there are things we can do to stay sharp. New studies show that exercise actually improves memory and cognitive ability.

According to Dr. Steven Weiniger, author of *Stand Taller ~ Live Longer: An Anti-Aging Strategy*, "Current research shows physical fitness has a positive effect on mental fitness. Regular exercise is a powerful strategy for improving memory, as well as reducing the risks of illness that could lead to memory loss."

A 2006 study reported in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that people ages 65 and older who exercised at least three times per week had a 30-40% lower risk of dementia than those in their age group who did not exercise.

"You cannot ignore the mind-body connection. Research shows consistent exercise reduces the risk of developing dementia and Alzheimer's. As important to note is that *not exercising* increases the risk of these illnesses. For the sake of the brain and the body, move it *to keep it*," says Dr. Weiniger.

Here are some easy ways to get started:

1. Walk. Find excuses to walk every day. Stroll to the mailbox; always choose parking spots that are further from your desired destination, walk around the house while chatting on the phone. If you've already developed a daily walking routine, increase the distance and duration of your trips.

2. Explore. Now is a great time to discover new interests that involve active participation. Start a garden, participate in nature walks, volunteer in your community, or join a social group that organizes regular outings.

3. Partner. Schedule a regular walk with a good friend; plan picnic lunches that begin and end with a walk in the park; sign up for a yoga, tai chi or posture exercise class. Commit to stay fit together.

Exercise your brain by moving your body. Start now, be consistent and gradually increase activity to stay fit in body *and mind*.

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