

Exercise is Good for Your Brain, Too

There are many reasons to be physically active, including reduced risk of chronic conditions such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. But being physically active can also benefit the brain in ways that protect memory and thinking skills.

In one study, researchers found that regular aerobic exercise that gets your heart pumping boosts the size of the hippocampus, the brain area involved in verbal memory and learning. (It should be noted that resistance training, balance and muscle toning exercises did not have the same results.) Additionally, studies have suggested that the parts of the brain that control thinking and memory have greater volume in those who exercise versus those who don't.

The benefits of exercise come directly from its ability to reduce insulin resistance and inflammation, stimulate the growth of new blood vessels in the brain, and help boost the survival rate of new brain cells. Exercise also indirectly benefits the brain by decreasing stress and anxiety, and improving sleep habits.

The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week to maintain good overall health. This amount is adequate to reap the brain-boosting benefits of exercise, too.



Working Out During a Pandemic

Most gyms may be closed, but you can still get in heart-pumping workouts at home.

- If the weather permits, go outside for a brisk walk around your neighborhood. Or if the weather does not allow for outdoor activities, dust off the elliptical or treadmill and put them to good use.
- Do some yard work. Using a push mower or raking grass clippings are easy ways to get in some added exercise.
- Try bicycling. At a moderate speed, a 155 pound person can burn 298 calories in 30 minutes.
- View online workouts. Due to COVID-19, some gyms are offering online workouts that you can follow at home.
- Remember to consult your family physician before beginning a vigorous physical workout routine.

SOURCES: Harvard Health Publishing, American Heart Association, Healthline