

## Exercise for our Brains

The brain is amazing! It weighs about three pounds, and yet contains more than 100 billion nerve cells that orchestrate every single aspect of our thoughts, perceptions, and behaviors.

If you take good care of your brain, like other organs and muscles, it will stay strong and vibrant. If not, it will slowly weaken. If you learn *how to exercise your brain*, provide it with proper nutrition, give it the environment and stimulation it craves, make wise lifestyle choices, and also give it the sleep it requires, you can exercise, and in turn, actually strengthen your brain.

More recent studies are proving the “link” between being physically healthy and the ability to ward off cognitive decline. Most of us have been historically taught that being overweight only affects the heart or makes us more prone to physical diseases, such as diabetes or cancer. Progressive studies show that heart disease, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure *can more than double the risk of Alzheimer's disease*. Thus, maintaining a healthy heart is essential to maintaining a healthy brain.

So how can we exercise our brains, and protect against cognitive deficits? Aerobic exercise on a consistent basis is the best exercise you can do for your heart and for your brain. Walking is especially good, because it increases blood circulation, oxygen and glucose that reach your brain, without overworking your body or organs. Learning new skills such as a foreign language, studying a musical instrument, or signing up for adult education courses at a community college are all fun and stimulating ways to exercise the brain!

*Data gathered from Readers' Digest™, Maryland Public Television™, and the Franklin Institute for Science Learning™.*

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