

Brain Power:

100 Ways to Keep Your Mind Healthy and Fit

Whether you are 25 or 75, it's always a good time to think about ways to keep your mind healthy. People with strong minds live a richer and more fulfilling life. The following list incorporates plenty of mental, physical, and nutritional ways to keep your mind sharp throughout your lifetime. You are sure to find some great ideas you can start doing today.

Get plenty of mental exercise

The brain can atrophy just like a muscle can. Take the following suggestions to give your mind a mental workout every day.

1. [Use your brain](#). There is a lot of knowledge up there, so put it into action. Doing tasks such as thinking through problems or avoiding the calculator for simple arithmetic is one way to exercise your mind.
2. [Crosswords](#). If you get the newspaper, work the crossword puzzles each day. They usually get progressively more difficult as the week goes on, culminating in the most challenging puzzle on Sunday. If you don't get the newspaper, you can find many free crossword puzzles online.
3. [Scrabble](#). Play Scrabble with friends in person or play online. Scrabble is a great way to get your brain thinking.
4. [News](#). Keep up with current events. Whether your interest is politics, world news, or your local small-town gossip, staying current with the news stimulates your mind.
5. [Read](#). Read anything...books, magazines, the back of cereal boxes. Reading keeps your mind pumping, and you learn new things at the same time. It's definitely a bonus if your reading material has some depth to it, though.
6. [Puzzles](#). While working jigsaw puzzles, you must think about how the shapes and colors match up. The problem-solving skills of working puzzles help keep your mind sharp.
7. [Movies](#). Watch a thought-provoking movie. Movies like [The Fountain](#), [Jacob's Ladder](#), and [12 Monkeys](#) can leave your brain pondering what you watched for days afterward.
8. [Word puzzles](#). Solve brainteasers such as anagrams, logic problems, or rebuses. You can have fun with these puzzles any time you have a few extra minutes.
9. [Video games](#). Who said video games are a waste of time? Some video game playing can help fight Alzheimer's.
10. [Hobbies](#). Start a new hobby or take up an old, forgotten one to get your creative juices flowing.

Don't forget physical exercise

Whether you want an all-out, five-day-a-week gym workout or you just want to keep from being a couch potato, physical exercise will help keep your mind as well as your body fit. Exercise increases blood-flow and oxygenates the brain, so get moving.

11. [Yard work](#). Mowing the lawn, raking leaves, or just picking up the twigs that have fallen on the yard are all great ways to get exercise.
12. [Walk the dog](#). Getting Fido and yourself outside for a walk improves both your mood and your health — which both lead to a stronger mind.
13. [Swim](#). Jump in the lake or take a swim at your neighborhood pool for a great form of exercise.
14. [Bike](#). A leisurely bike ride through a park or down a dedicated [bike trail](#) is not only good for your body, but you will enjoy the scenery too.
15. [Yoga](#). Practicing yoga is an excellent way to get your body and mind moving any time of the day.
16. [Tai chi](#). Learn this ancient form of graceful movement and stretching for a super way to start each morning.
17. [Hike](#). Put on some sturdy shoes and get moving. Hiking can be as easy as exploring a city park or part of a more elaborate visit to a state or national park.
18. [Dance](#). Take dancing lessons. Learn to tango or do the latest line dance and put your body in motion. You'll [age better](#) and feel better.
19. [Tennis](#). The mental and physical stimulation of this popular game will have your brain health in top form.
20. [Golf](#). Enjoy a leisurely round of golf for both exercise and social benefits that will help keep your mind fit.

Challenge your brain

Learning and experiencing new things is a great way to challenge your brain. Going beyond just a daily workout, these ideas will give your mind a real chance to exercise as well as add a whole new dimension to your life.

21. [Learn](#). Be curious about the world around you. If you hear an unfamiliar word, look it up. See a flower you don't recognize? Find out what it is.
22. [Music](#). Learn to play a musical instrument, learn how to read music, or take a music theory class.
23. [Language](#). Study a foreign language. Maybe you can revive that high school Spanish and prepare yourself for a visit to Mexico.
24. [Classes](#). Sign up for a MOOC (massive open online course) and learn about equine nutrition, artificial intelligence, or one of countless other interesting topics.
25. [Art](#). Learning a new art form doesn't require that you have talent, just an interest to learn. Study the art of photography, learn to paint, or find out how to [throw pottery](#).
26. [Switch hands](#). Try using your less dominant hand for simple tasks like eating or writing. Changing hands really stimulates the brain.
27. [Chess](#). Learn how to play chess or find a chess partner if you already know how.
28. [Career](#). Is your career meeting your need for fulfillment or damaging your health? If it's the latter, think hard about making a switch.

29. [Travel](#). Whether you've always wanted to travel the now-defunct Route 66 or wanted to explore Mayan ruins, take a trip. Exploring different cultures and breaking out of your routine sharpen the mind.
30. [School](#). Go back to school for that degree you never got. Studying at college is a great brain challenge.

Eat healthily

The connection between what goes in your body and how your brain performs is a strong one. All of these nutritional tips will provide you with delicious and brain-healthy ways to eat.

31. [Antioxidants](#). Eating foods that are [antioxidants](#) can help improve focus, problem-solving, and memory. Supplements can help, but food with antioxidant properties work best.
32. [Fish](#). The ultimate brain food, eat fish a few times a week for a healthy mind. Try to avoid mercury-heavy fish such as swordfish and stick with safer fish such as salmon.
33. [Avocado](#). Avocados have monosaturated fat (the good fat), which increases blood flow. Increased blood flow equals a healthy brain.
34. [Fruits and veggies](#). Your mama always said to eat your vegetables. She was right, and you'd be stupid to ignore her ... literally.
35. [Whole grains](#). Two and a half servings of whole grains a day can significantly reduce your chance for a stroke and other chronic diseases.
36. [Olive oil](#). This miracle elixir has been shown to break up clots in capillaries and generally help with blood flow. Consider replacing your other vegetable oil with a good quality olive oil.
37. [Onions](#). Onions have antioxidant enzymes that may help block damage to the blood-brain barrier. Just don't breath on us.
38. [Super foods](#). Ever heard of Goji berries? What do they have in common with blueberries? They are both part of the new group called superfoods. These are the best foods to eat for the most nutritional punch.
39. [Cooked food](#). Raw food is all the rage when it comes to healthy eating, but recent findings show early man developed much faster after he discovered the joy of cooking.
40. [Breakfast](#). It may be known as the most important meal of the day, but it is now considered the best meal for your brain too.

Supplement your diet the brain-healthy way

Supplements don't just have to come in pill form. Find out how each of these supplements to your diet will help promote a healthy brain.

41. [Omega-3](#). Omega-3 amino acids are one of the best brain supplements you can take, helping stave off Alzheimer's, schizophrenia, and depression.
42. [Green tea](#). Drinking green tea is great for a healthy mind because it is full of antioxidants. Steep a cup and know you are helping your mind stay strong.

43. **B Vitamins**. A vitamin B complex will give you your daily requirements of thiamine, riboflavin, biotin, and more that help you metabolize foods, keep you from getting sick, and slow the aging process.
44. **Water**. Staying hydrated benefits your body and brain by keeping you detoxified and oxygenated, so drink lots of water.
45. **Kampuchea**. The benefits of drinking this raw fermented tea may have been overblown a bit, but it has been shown to improve liver function, at the very least.
46. **Vitamin E**. Vitamin E is a strong antioxidant that is beneficial to brain health. Take it to give your brain a boost.
47. **Vitamin C**. Used in conjunction with vitamin E, this supplement may help prevent the onset of Alzheimer's.
48. **Matcha**. This stone-ground, powdered form of green tea is a super-concentrated version of the green tea that comes in tea bags. Buy the highest quality for a super blast of brain health.
49. **Grape seed extract**. Studies have shown a connection between taking grape seed extract and preventing the onset of dementia, as well as fighting colorectal cancer on its own.
50. **Lecithin**. Not only does **lecithin** improve brain function, it breaks down bad cholesterol and helps blood pressure, to boot.

Take these only in moderate amounts or not at all

Some things are just better left out of your body or only introduced in small doses. Find out what you should limit or eliminate to help keep your mind in good health.

51. **Fast food**. The saturated fats and generally poor food quality of fast food is not something you want to keep putting in your body. Reducing fast food as much as you can will help keep you mentally fit.
52. **Heavily processed food**. The preservatives, artificial ingredients, and high fat content of processed foods are not good for the body. Try to eat foods as close to their source as you can. A slice of cheddar cheese is so much better for your brain than a slice of processed American cheese.
53. **White sugar**. Refined "table" sugar creates strong fluctuations in blood-sugar levels, which results in a whole host of health problems, including cardiovascular and cholesterol issues. Stick with a more natural sweetener such as honey, cane sugar, or agave.
54. **Hydrogenated vegetable oils**. The oils found in margarine and other processed foods hold a direct link to higher cholesterol, which in turn, leads to less blood flow to the brain.
55. **Caffeine**. Reduce your caffeine intake. But don't worry about eliminating it altogether, as studies indicate a little caffeine may be beneficial to your brain.
56. **Alcohol**. Keep drinking to a minimum — one or two drinks a day at the most. Heavy drinking is directly linked to memory loss.
57. **High fructose corn syrup**. This artificial sweetener may be worse for you than sugar, tricking your brain into making you think you're hungry when you're not.
58. **Saturated fat**. Replace saturated fat from animal products with monounsaturated fat from healthy vegetable oils.

59. [Environmental pollutants](#). The toxic effects of pollutants is not healthy for the body, and especially the brain. If you live in a heavily polluted city, you might want to consider moving.
60. [Heavy metals](#). Heavy metals disrupt the protective blood-brain barrier and are not easily flushed from the body. Two sources of heavy metals are mercury found in many fish and lead found in places such as some job sites, in certain dishware from Mexico, and lead pipes in older homes.

Be safe

Protecting your brain from injury is a great way to promote a fit mind. Brain injury can debilitate the brain's functioning. Learn how to protect your head from injury with this list.

61. [Sports helmets](#). Protect your head when doing certain physical activities such as bicycling, skiing, or rollerblading by wearing the appropriate helmet for your sport.
62. [Smoking](#). Smoking robs your body of oxygen, and oxygen is essential to a healthy brain. Also, [studies show](#) that Alzheimer's is twice as likely to occur in smokers as in non-smokers.
63. [Heat stroke](#). Avoid heat stroke for a healthier brain. If you plan to be out in the sun, always wear a hat and stay hydrated with plenty of water. Keep in the shade as much as possible.
64. [Driving](#). Practice safe driving habits. Becoming a defensive driver reduces your chances of getting in an accident.
65. [Handrails](#). Use handrails on steep stairs or any stairs if you are in bad weather. Wet or icy stairs can cause you to fall easily.
66. [On motorcycles](#). Always wear a helmet when riding a motorcycle or scooter to protect your head in the event of a wreck or loss of control.
67. [Drugs](#). Dare to be drug free, bro. Some drugs can diminish brain capacity, and overdosing on certain street drugs can cause permanent brain damage. Just don't run this risk to your brain.
68. [Repetitive injury](#). Any repetitive head injury considerably elevates the chances of long-term brain injury. Sports such as football, soccer, and boxing all run a higher risk of repetitive injury, so take caution if you participate in sports with higher risk.
69. [Seatbelts](#). Always wear a seatbelt when you are in a car — front or back seat. If you are in a car accident, your chances of sustaining a head injury while buckled up are much lower.
70. [Home safety](#). Practice smart safety around the house such as using a sturdy ladder rather than a rickety one or just stacking items on a chair to get items out of reach.

Reduce stress

Not only does stress help keep your body healthy, it also improves mental health. Use these suggestions for ways to find stress relief and relaxation for your life.

71. [Emotions](#). Keep in touch with your emotions. Pretending you don't have certain feelings such as anger, sadness, or loneliness will just push these feelings down until they come

back out in less than ideal ways. Identify your emotions and accept them for what they are.

72. **Bath.** Soak in a hot bath to feel the stress just melt away from your body. After a 15 minute soak, your body and mind will both feel refreshed.
73. **Meditation.** For improving focus and stress relief, meditation can't be beat. It can even permanently impact your brain for the better.
74. **Breathing.** The deep, relaxing form of breathing used during yoga practice can bring benefits to your brain as well. Not only will this deep breathing serve as a form of relaxation, it also oxygenates the body, which keeps the brain healthy.
75. **Relaxation exercises.** Try some of these relaxation exercises, and you will teach your body how to feel calmer, thereby reducing your stress levels.
76. **Fun.** Have fun in life. Take time away from work and family responsibilities to just enjoy life. When you can't get away, learn how to find the joy in all you do.
77. **Yes!** Think positively and you will discover that your approach to life is one of much less stress. You will feel empowered to make things happen and to appreciate what you've already accomplished.
78. **Smile.** Smile and laugh often. Not only will a happy demeanor help you feel better, it will also affect those around you.
79. **Sleep.** Getting enough sleep and sleeping well contribute to a reduction in stress levels. Find out [how to get a good night's sleep](#) without a sleep aid.
80. **Get a pet.** Pet owners show fewer signs of stress and are less lonely. Think about going through a pet rescue organization to help find a home for a needy animal and helping yourself too.

Stimulate Your Senses

An experience that incorporates one or more of your senses serves to stimulate brain activity and help keep your mind sharp. The following activities will provide you with plenty of sensory experiences you will enjoy while strengthening your mental acuity.

81. **Sculpt.** Pick up some modeling clay and play with some simple sculpting. You don't have to be Rodin to enjoy the feeling of the clay in your hands.
82. **Aromatherapy.** In reasonable segments, aromatherapy sessions can do wonders for your stress levels.
83. **Massage.** Get a massage and enjoy the tactile sensation of a professional working out the stress and tension in your muscles. Massage therapists typically use essential oils in their massage oil, so you also have the added benefit of a pleasing scent.
84. **New food.** Try a new type of food, especially if it is a different ethnic food than you are accustomed to eating. Thai food and Indian food both utilize a wide range of herbs and spices that will stimulate your sense of taste, smell, and sight.
85. **Chai.** If you haven't experienced the sensation of chai, give it a try. This tea infused with a variety of spices and blended with milk or a non-dairy milk substitute will awaken your tongue and mind as well.
86. **Garden.** Reach your hands into the earth and plant some herbs and flowers. Gardening is a great multisensory experience, as you feel the soil, hear nature and the neighborhood

around you, taste herbs you've grown, and appreciate the color and beauty of the flowers you nurtured.

87. **Sex**. Enjoy sex with your partner. Not only will it stimulate your senses, it has also been shown to sharpen your mind through its [cardiovascular benefits](#).
88. **Concert**. Listening to music, whether it's a small chamber music ensemble or a full-out rock show, will stimulate your brain.
89. **Bake cookies**. The feel of the dough, the smell of the baking cookies, and the taste of your finished product is a great multisensory experience.
90. **Yarn**. Play with yarn or thread as you learn to knit, crochet, or embroider. Not only will you love the tactile sensation of the varying types of textiles, but you will also challenge your brain to a new learning experience.

Be Social

Having a strong social network reduces isolation and stress and stimulates the brain through shared learning experiences and emotional connections. Even if you already have a good group of friends, you will likely find some great ideas for strengthening those social connections with these tips.

91. **Email**. With the widespread usage and popularity of email, there's no reason not to keep in touch with old and new friends alike. Be sure you actually send a message, though, and don't just forward jokes.
92. **Letters**. Rediscover the lost art of writing letters. Don't just type it up, either. Find a beautiful stationary and hand-write a letter to an old friend.
93. **Clubs**. Join a club. With everything out there from the Elks Lodge to a nature conservancy group, you are sure to find a group of folks with similar interests as you.
94. **Volunteer**. Volunteering can be a great way to meet people, stay social, and be making a difference.
95. **Phone**. In this age of electronics and heavy scheduling, the art of a leisurely phone call to a friend can become lost. Pick up the phone and talk to someone.
96. **Dinner group**. Start a dinner club with six or eight people. Have each person bring one dish and alternate homes for hosting.
97. **Book group**. Combine reading with the social aspect of discussing your book to gain two benefits to brain health.
98. **Cooking class**. Taking a cooking class will not only get you out and meeting new people, you will be learning how to eat more healthily, too.
99. **Cards**. Playing cards is a fun and social experience. Find some card-playing partners and set up a weekly or monthly card date.
100. **Online**. Join an online discussion group. Find a topic about which you are interested in learning or you are already an expert and join in a discussion. Online friendships are a nice complement to the ones you have in person.

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