

## Cultivate Contentment

Over time, **stress** causes wear and tear on your body and brain. Find ways to manage or lower your stress through mindfulness meditation, deep breathing, time in nature, and activities that you find enjoyable and meaningful.

If you think you may be **depressed**, get help right away. Regular exercise, therapy, and medication can all be effective.

Some **medicines** interact with others or with food, supplements, or alcohol. Ask your healthcare providers and pharmacist about possible cognitive side effects.

## Buyer Beware!

There is no research evidence to support the value of computer-based brain training for brain health. While so-called brain games can be fun, and probably won't harm you, you might get more benefit from playing challenging games with others in person. You can also save money by ignoring the ads for vitamins and supplements that are sold for brain health. There is no convincing research that these can reverse or slow memory loss. Ask your healthcare provider or a nutritionist if you have questions about any supplements that may benefit you.



Funded by The New Jersey Department of Human Services,  
Division of Aging Services

©2023 Rutgers Health University Behavioral Health Care

## WE CARE

We hope these tips help you take action to support your brain health. The Care2Caregiver Staff is available to help you work on your plan for keeping your brain healthy. Call us at 800-424-2494.



WHEN YOU CARE • WE ARE THERE

### For more information:

Comprehensive Services on Aging (COPSA) has been providing compassionate and sensitive mental health care to older adults since 1975. A team of Geriatric Psychiatrists, Social Workers and Case Managers are available to assist families with diagnosis and treatment. COPSA also provides training for professionals, family caregivers and the community on issues related to aging, memory and mental health.

Care2Caregivers provides resources, referrals, information and supportive counseling to anyone caring for someone with memory loss. Call for help.

**HELPLINE: 800.424.2494**  
[www.Care2Caregivers.com](http://www.Care2Caregivers.com)

# RUTGERS HEALTH

University Behavioral Health Care  
COPSA Institute for Alzheimer's Disease & Related Disorders

# RUTGERS HEALTH

University Behavioral Health Care  
COPSA Institute for Alzheimer's Disease & Related Disorders

## BRAIN HEALTH



## Reducing Risks & Boosting Health

## Did you know that your brain changes throughout your life?

The connections between different parts of your brain continue to develop and reorganize based on what you do and what happens around you. At times, the brain can be disrupted or damaged by injury or stroke, or conditions that cause dementia. To maximize brain health, it's important to reduce risks of brain damage and disease, while increasing your brain's ability to do, and keep doing, the things that enrich your life.

Keeping your brain healthy will go a long way towards extending your quality of life as well as how long you live. While many factors that affect brain health are things you can't control, there are many more actions you can take that will help prevent brain injury, disease, and cognitive decline.

### Reducing Risks

Damage to the brain from **head injury, illness, or stroke** has both immediate and long-term consequences. Wear your seat belt and use a helmet for sports and potentially risky home and yard maintenance. Take steps to prevent falls in the home and outside on slippery surfaces.

The biggest risk for stroke is **high blood pressure**. Get yours checked regularly and take any medication as prescribed.

Diabetes, high cholesterol, COVID-19 infections, and other **health conditions** can have direct and indirect effects on your brain health. Learn how to avoid new problems and how to treat and control any conditions you already have.

Your brain repairs itself as you sleep. **Sleep problems** cause difficulties in concentration, attention, thinking, and memory, as well as other health problems. Sleep disruption and too little sleep are associated with developing dementia. Follow guidelines for sleep hygiene to establish daily routines to help you sleep. Keep in mind that sleeping pills can make things worse.

Heavy **alcohol** use increases the risk of dementia. Light and moderate alcohol use may reduce risk, but some research studies suggest that any alcohol use can increase risk. So don't start drinking or increase how much you drink!

**Smoking** is associated with dementia, stroke, and other health challenges. Quitting smoking, even later in life, lessens the risk. Secondhand smoke and air pollution may also be risk factors.

### Boosting Health

Remember that "what's good for your body is good for your brain." Since your brain gets energy and oxygen through blood, keeping your heart working well is critical!

Physical activity of all sorts will help keep you healthy, which can help prevent dementia.



Building your strength, balance, and flexibility through **exercise** will help you manage your daily life activities better and for a longer time.

**Eat well** by adding vegetables and fruits to your daily diet—try for at least five a day. Limit sugar. Drink plenty of water. If you're looking for more guidance, the Mediterranean Diet is shown to be beneficial. A nutritionist can offer personalized information and support.

**Spend time connecting** with people you care about and in groups that are interesting and meaningful to you. Conversations and social interactions keep your important brain circuits working well.

Challenge your mind! People who read, play a variety of games, speak a second language, play music, work in an intellectually challenging job, or do other activities that involve **mental stimulation and problem solving**, have a reduced risk of developing dementia. This may be because new learning builds new brain connections.

EXERCISE AND  
STAY ACTIVE



MANAGE  
STRESS



EAT HEALTHY  
MEALS



AVOID ALCOHOL  
& QUIT SMOKING



GET PLENTY  
OF SLEEP



STAY SOCIALLY  
ENGAGED



800.424.2494

www.COPSAInstitute.com