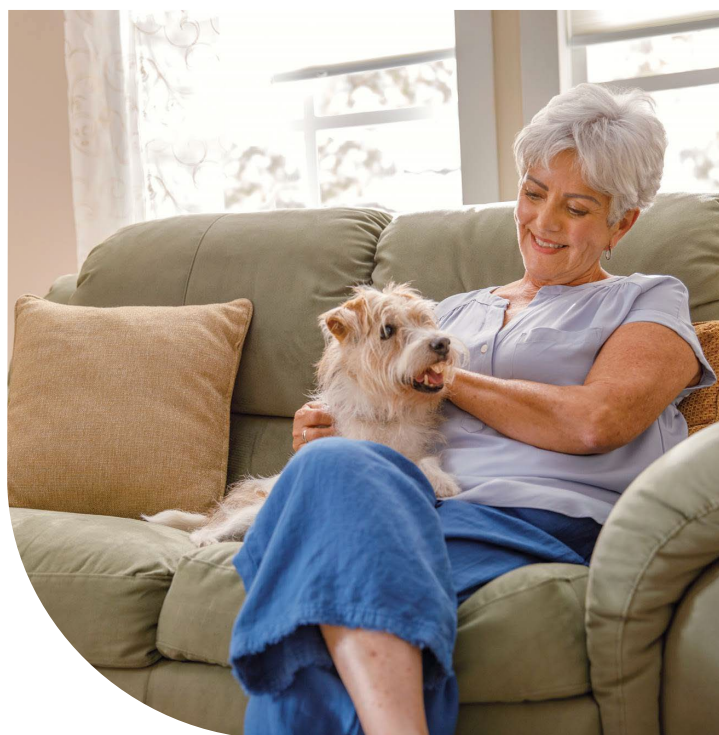


Battling the aging brain

Similar to other parts of the body, the human brain tends to become less agile as people get older. Learn about the changes you can expect and how to keep your brain healthy.

Parts of the brain

The brain is often described as the most complex organ in the body. It's responsible for thoughts, feelings, memories, emotions and behavior. It is made up of several different parts—they all work together but each piece plays its own role.¹



The cerebrum is the largest part of the brain. It can be divided into four lobes:

Parts of the brain	Function
Frontal lobe	Thinking, planning, problems solving, reasoning and motor skills
Parietal lobe	Controls sensory information like taste, touch and pain
Temporal lobe	Helps with memory and understanding sounds; contains the hippocampus
Occipital lobe	Receives and interprets information from the retinas
Brain stem	Controls vital functions like heart rate, breathing and blood pressure
Cerebellum	Helps control balance and posture and coordinates voluntary movements ²

The brain is connected to the rest of the body by a complicated system of nerves. Nerve cells, also called neurons, communicate with one another to send signals all over the body. Neurons communicate with one another via synapses; these allow each brain cell to connect to tens of thousands of other brain cells.

The aging brain: What's normal and what's not?

Some brain changes are a normal part of aging, but others are not normal.

Normal age-related changes	Abnormal age-related changes
Small declines in memory	Being unable to remember recent events
Slower processing speed	Forgetting how to use common objects or words
Increased reaction time	Getting lost in familiar locations
Decrease in speed of learning	Being unable to follow directions
Difficulty doing more than one task at a time	Neglecting safety, hygiene and nutrition
Difficulty ignoring distractions ²	Decline in the ability to socialize ³

If you or someone you love notice any signs or symptoms of dementia, it's important to talk to your doctor right away.

Help keep your brain healthy

There are many things you can do to keep your brain working its best.



Train your brain⁵

Challenging your mind may have short- and long-term benefits for your brain, helping reduce your risk of dementia and cognitive decline.⁵

How can you train your brain?

- All kinds of puzzles can give your brain a workout
- Learn new things
- Do things differently than you normally do
- Take on a new project that involves planning and design⁵



Stay active

Exercise may play a role in decreasing the risk of age-related cognitive decline. It may also increase blood flow to the brain.⁶

How much is enough? Aim to get about 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week.⁶ **Remember:** Talk to your healthcare provider before beginning an exercise program.



Eat brain-friendly foods

The Mediterranean diet may help reduce the risk of dementia.⁷ It consists of:

- Focusing on fruits, vegetables, nuts and whole grains
- Using healthy fats instead of unhealthy fats
- Limiting red meat
- Using herbs instead of salt
- Eating fish and poultry at least twice per week⁷

Help keep your brain healthy (continued)

There are many things you can do to keep your brain working its best.



Connect with others⁵

Remaining socially active may help support brain health and possibly delay the onset of dementia. It may also reduce your risk for depression.⁵

- Volunteer
- Call or email old friends regularly
- Join a social-interest club
- Use social networking sites
- Take a group class
- Go to public places
- Make a weekly date with friends

If being social doesn't come naturally, set a goal to do one activity each day that allows you to talk to others.



Get enough sleep

Your brain needs regular, high-quality sleep to function at its best. A lack of sleep makes it difficult to think clearly, solve problems and store and recall memories.^{8,9}

Follow these tips for better sleep

- Get on a schedule to keep your body on a routine
- Create calming bedtime rituals
- Keep naps short and early



Memory aids

Remember, some memory loss is common as you age. There are a few things to help you make the most of the memory you have left.³

- Keep a to-do list with details of your priorities
- Create a routine for important things so you don't forget
- Get creative when learning new things and making memories³

Notes

Sources

1. “Brain Basics: Know Your Brain”, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, Last accessed April 13, 2023, www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Know-Your-Brain.
2. “Slide show: How your brain works”, Mayo Clinic, Last accessed May 30, 2023, www.mayoclinic.org/brain/sls-20077047?s=8.
3. “Memory and Aging”, American Psychological Association, Last accessed April 13, 2023, www.apa.org/pi/aging/memory-and-aging.pdf.
4. “Age-Related Memory Loss”, Help Guide, Last accessed April 13, 2023, www.helpguide.org/articles/memory/age-related-memory-loss.htm.
5. “Stay Mentally and Socially Active”, Alzheimer’s Association, Last accessed April 13, 2023, www.alz.org/help-support/brain_health/stay_mentally_and_socially_active.
6. “10 Ways to Love Your Brain”, Alzheimer’s Association, Last accessed April 13, 2023, www.alz.org/help-support/brain_health/10_ways_to_love_your_brain.
7. “Adopt a Healthy Diet”, Alzheimer’s Association, Last accessed April 13, 2023, www.alz.org/help-support/brain_health/adopt_a_healthy_diet.
8. “Brain Basics: Understanding Sleep”, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, Last accessed April 13, 2023, www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Understanding-Sleep.
9. “How to Sleep Better”, Help Guide, Last accessed April 13, 2023, <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/sleep/getting-better-sleep.htm>.

This information is provided for educational purposes only. It is not to be used for medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Consult your doctor if you have questions or concerns. Consult your doctor before beginning any new diet or exercise regimen.