

# The Wellness Express

Jump on the train to good health

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## 10 Ways to Keep Your Brain in Shape

### Presented by:

As the large baby boomer population moves into their golden years, we're seeing more focus in the media on diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, which primarily affect seniors.

While neurological change happens to your brain throughout your life, it only takes a few positive steps to better your brain health.

### 1) Learn a Musical Instrument

Scientific research is abundant on how musical education delivers a bounty of brain benefits. Learning an instrument stimulates multiple areas of the brain. Among other things, it improves visual spatial skill, creativity and reasoning.

Students that learn a musical instrument routinely score higher in mathematics and science tests than their peers. This has been proven in countries where musical education is a priority, as these students have the highest math and science scores in the world.

In a study conducted by the University of California (Irvine), 135 grade two students participated in four months of piano keyboard training. These students scored 27% higher on proportional math and fractions than fellow students who received no keyboard training.<sup>1</sup>

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### 2) Listen to Music

Just listening to music helps your brain stay sharp. Specific types of music can stimulate memory and emotion. In one study, children with attention deficit disorder who were exposed to Mozart's music while undergoing biofeedback training showed a marked improvement in social skills, concentration, mood and impulsive activity.

As well, research from the University of San Antonio indicates a promising new development in using music to recover speech fluency in stroke victims.<sup>1</sup>

### 3) Learn Something New

Expanding your knowledge outside your current areas of expertise can boost your brain power. Take a course in a subject you know nothing about. Lifelong education is proven to reduce the chances of developing Alzheimer's disease.

### 4) Stay Social

Having good friends and a supportive family brings many brain health advantages.

### Exercise of the Week

Pelvic Rotations – Leg Straight

Difficulty: Moderate

*(Consult your chiropractor before starting this or any other exercise.)*

**Start:** Lie down on back with legs straight, resting on floor. Place arms out to side, palms up.

**Exercise:** Extend one leg straight up, feet pointing toward ceiling. Then, let leg roll all the way across body so that foot touches floor. Place hand on knee to keep it in that position. Hold for 30-60 seconds, and then return to starting position. Switch sides, and repeat 2X per side.



Studies show people with a good social network, especially seniors, have enhanced neurological fitness as well as an overall better quality of life. Staying social can stave off problems like depression and anxiety. Humans are meant to interact with each other, so step away from the computer more often and engage in face-to-face communication.

## 5) Get Enough Sleep

Although your brain doesn't shut off when you sleep, it does require this down time to regenerate. A 2007 Princeton University study revealed that lack of sleep may stop the brain from producing new brain cells in the hippocampus part of the brain, which is involved in forming memories.<sup>2</sup> Researchers believe stress hormones increase with sleep deprivation. And not enough sleep can make you more susceptible to the effects of stress.

## 6) Get Active

Along with the rest of your body, exercising does wonders for your brain. By staying physically active, you protect your brain from environmental toxins. And exercise slashes stress chemicals that can damage a variety of brain structures, including areas key to short-term memory function. As well, working out keeps your heart pumping much needed oxygen and glucose to your brain.

The *Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences* published research revealing that people who are physically inactive increase their risk of Alzheimer's by 250%!<sup>3</sup>

## 7) Eat Brain Food

Your brain is quickly affected by what you eat.

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As a large portion of your brain is fat, get the right amounts of Omega 3 fatty acids, found in many species of fish like salmon, tuna and sardines. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, whose abundant antioxidants protect the brain from free radical damage. The B vitamins are also vital to neurological function. As you get older, your digestion system becomes less efficient at absorbing nutrients from food. You may need to add a daily B-complex supplement.

## 8) Pray or Meditate

People who pray or meditate gain significant neurological benefits than people who don't. Individuals who engage in regular spiritual activities have lower stress levels and are less likely to

develop depression and anxiety  
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## Adjustments

You may be surprised to discover the chiropractic connection to the brain. However, it's actually easy to see how brain health can be improved with adjustments from your chiropractor. Subluxations restrict blood flow and interfere with proper communication between your brain and nervous system. Your brain depends on healthy nerve function to communicate to your body and vice-versa. With regular chiropractic adjustments, you help keep your nervous system free of subluxations and ensure healthy blood flow to your brain!

## Quote of the Week

"The human body was designed to walk, run or stop; it wasn't built for coasting."

- Cullen Hightower

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## References and Sources:

1. Making a Good Brain Great by Daniel G. Amen, MD – Three Rivers Press, 2005.
  2. Sleep deprivation can inhibit adult hippocampal neurogenesis independent of adrenal stress hormones – *Am. J. Physiol. Regul. Integr. Comp. Physiol.* 2008 294 (5) R1693-R1703.
  3. Think About Your Future. Maintain Your Brain Today – *Brain and Cognition, Volume 58, Issue 2, July 2005, Pages 157-165.*
- Think About Your Future. Maintain Your Brain Today – *Alzheimer's Association.*

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