



Are You Cognitively Fit?

Learn to Stretch & Train Your Brain for Cognitive Health

Our brains give us the ability to speak, imagine, and solve problems. It is truly an amazing organ. Over the lifespan it becomes more important to enhance your **cognitive abilities** as a means of combating any age-related memory declines. Your best defense against a memory problem is to **stay healthy** and **fit**. You can achieve optimum **cognitive fitness** by engaging in activities that stretch and train your brain in fun and stimulating ways.

Consider adding some of the following **physical**, **intellectual**, and **social** activities to your own cognitive fitness program:

Physical	Intellectual	Social
Exercise regularly to improve blood flow and oxygen to the brain.	Engage in new learning: take an on-line continuing education course, learn a new language or advance a language you already know, join a computer discussion group in an area of interest, intentionally take detours to avoid routine (including brushing your teeth with your non-dominant hand, sitting in a different chair at the dining room table, sleep on the opposite side of the bed [when you don't need to wake early, of course!])	Maintain your current social contacts and/or make new ones -- socializing with others helps us stay intellectually stimulated.
Practice a daily meditation routine which can slow down age-related cognitive declines (e.g., yoga, listen to classical music, practice deep breathing).	There are several Apps that can be downloaded to your cell phone (e.g., Brain Bomb, Clockwork Brain) and computer "brain games" that you can purchase (e.g., Nintendo: Brain Age, Brain Academy; Wii: Safecracker, Hooked, Lotus Flame). Find one that offers progressive intellectual stimulation , or, different levels of the same game to continually challenge and stimulate the various areas of your brain.	Take ballroom or salsa dancing lessons both of which involve socializing, intellectual stimulation (as you must focus on the specific dance steps), and a physical work-out.

Get plenty of rest (i.e., sleep 6 to 8 hrs/day).	Visit www.thegreatcourses.com , a website that focuses on issues of life-long learning, pursuing interests, maintaining cognitive skills and an active mind.	
	Do crosswords, Sudoku, and/or play stimulating brain games at sites like www.lumosity.com , www.brainmetrix.com , and www.elevate.com to enhance memory, cognitive flexibility, and processing-speed.	

Fun Fact:

*Through the latest research and brain imaging technology, scientists have discovered that the adult brain continues to change and develop across the life span. This dynamic capacity of the brain to develop is termed **neuroplasticity** and refers to those physical changes that take place in your brain as neurons (and the connections between them) change to encode and process information. The changes occur in response to stimuli, cognitive demands, and new learning, and result in the brain creating new neural pathways and connections. However, brain development only happens if the brain is kept active. Just like muscles in your body, if you don't use your brain, it doesn't become stronger. **HeadStrong** is one example of a product that contains exercises that have been developed to stimulate and challenge your brain to encourage neuroplasticity.*

Source: adapted from www.clevelandclinicwellness.com