Brain Benefits of Exercise

Creates new brain cells. Studies show that exercise fuels the creation of new brain cells, while slowing neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s.

Improves thinking and memory. As we get older, our brain shrinks in size, which affects memory and other cognitive functions. Research published in the journal *Neurology* suggests that older people who regularly walked had larger brains and better memory than those who did not walk as much. And the benefits are not limited to just adults. University of Illinois researchers have found that physical activity may enhance the academic achievements of children by improving their attention and working memory skills.

Enhances performance. Experts have noted that exercise improves your brain immediately by raising your focus for two to three hours afterwards. If you have a challenging task or project at work, take a walk or squeeze in a workout beforehand—you’ll be at your best when it’s show time.

Can Exercise Make You Smarter?

Want to boost your brainpower? Skip the library and head to the gym! To be sure, a strong body of evidence shows that just 30 minutes of exercise a day can make you smarter. Something as simple as taking a brisk walk or basic weight training can help protect your memory, improve your thinking and prevent dementia.

When you exercise you can think more clearly, perform better and feel better—and there is hard science to support this. Research shows that as your body moves, your nervous system releases chemicals such as serotonin and dopamine, which make you feel calm, happy, and euphoric.

More recently, scientists have found that exercise can help create new brain cells. Your brain has about 100 billion nerve cells, called neurons that essentially tell your body what to do. At one time it was thought neurons died off as a person aged and new ones couldn’t be made. But findings published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* reported that cell creation in some parts of the brain can be easily spawned with exercise.

These positive results occur almost immediately (usually within minutes of exercising). However, scientists note that to keep those benefits, you have to get regular exercise; within a month of inactivity, the neuron-boosting effects begin to decline.
This Month's Recipe:

**Grilled Marinated Salmon & Bell Peppers**

In addition to high quality protein, salmon offers a whopping dose of omega-3 fats. Current health recommendations suggest that you consume at least two servings of fish weekly, so make salmon a regular player at your dinner table.

**INGREDIENTS:**
- About 2 lbs fresh filet of salmon (I prefer to cut the filet in 2-3 pieces for easier handling on the grill)
- Any brand of bottled ginger/soy marinade (I prefer Soy Vay Veri Veri Teriyaki brand, 21-ounce bottle)

**INSTRUCTIONS:**
Place the salmon in a large Ziplock bag with enough marinade to cover (about ½ a bottle). Marinate for 30-60 minutes in the refrigerator. Prepare your grill. When the grill is ready, place the salmon skin-side down on the grill directly over the hot coals. Cover and cook the fish without moving it until the skin gets brown and a bit crispy – about 5 minutes. Carefully flip the fish over with a spatula and cook, covered, until the center of the fish is just opaque. Serve immediately.

**DON'T OVERCOOK YOUR SALMON!**
REMOVE IT FROM THE HEAT WHEN THE CENTER STILL HAS A TOUCH OF A DARKER PINK COLOR

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**Grilled Bell Peppers**

Prepare grill for cooking. Cut each pepper in half lengthwise and remove the seeds, stem and ribs. Cut each bell pepper half into three equal size pieces. Stir the garlic and rosemary into the olive oil and brush a light coating of the oil/herb mixture on both sides of the bell pepper pieces. Season with salt and pepper and cook bell pepper pieces on a hot grill, turning once, for about 7-8 minutes.

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**INGREDIENTS**
- 3 large bell peppers (I prefer 1 yellow, 1 orange and 1 red)
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 Tbs chopped, fresh rosemary

With formal training in nutrition and medicine, plus hands-on experience as a mother of four and family physician, Dr. Ann is a unique nutrition expert for the real world. The whole food ingredients found in Dr. Ann’s recipes are the right foods for health and vitality. Nutritional excellence naturally follows. For more, visit DrAnnWellness.com.
Nothing is more fundamental to a happy, productive and fulfilling life than a brain that operates at optimal capacity. So, don’t take your gray matter for granted! With the right foods, you can actually enhance your memory, focus and mood. Take note of these simple nutritional strategies to boost your brainpower.

**Feed your brain the right fats.** The type of fat in your diet has a profound impact on the structure, function, and health of your brain:

- **Eat foods that provide omega-3 fats.** Omega-3 fats are the brain’s highest quality building material and also play a key role in cardiovascular health. The best omega-3 food choices include oily fish like salmon, walnuts, canola oil, omega-3 eggs, flax seeds and whole soy foods.

- **Minimize saturated and trans fats.** These “brain-busting” fats can compromise brain health along with the health of your arteries. These fats can be found in fatty cuts of red meat, whole dairy products, butter, processed/fast foods, stick margarine and shortening.

**Avoid highly processed foods.** Your brain demands a constant supply of its preferred fuel—glucose—along with many other nutrients. The perfect brain foods are unprocessed, nutrient-dense carbs: whole grains, fruits, vegetables and beans.

**Incorporate antioxidants into your diet.** Your brain is uniquely susceptible to oxidative damage from free radicals. Fortunately, you can combat free radical damage to your brain by eating an abundance of foods high in antioxidants:

- Fruit, especially berries, cherries, whole citrus, plums, apples with skin, red and purple grapes, apricots, and kiwi
- Veggies, especially dark leafy greens, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, avocados, red bell peppers, asparagus, beets, and red onions
- Freshly brewed unsweetened tea (green, white, or black)
- Dark chocolate (70% or higher cacao, in moderation)
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Herbs and spices, especially parsley, turmeric, hot peppers, garlic, basil, chives, and cinnamon

**Don’t let yourself go hungry.** True hunger signifies low blood glucose levels—a sure impediment to optimal brain function. Make sure you eat three meals daily with a mid-afternoon snack to keep ravenous hunger at bay.

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**SUPERSTAR FOOD OF THE MONTH - Eggs!**

Eggs have always been a cheap, delicious and convenient source of high-quality, low-fat protein along with B vitamins, vitamin E and iron. And, thanks to modern food technology, eggs are now healthier than ever. Many egg producers now fortify their chicken feed with omega-3 fats which means that this superstar fat gets incorporated into the egg yolk. Simply look for “DHA” or “omega-3” on the label.
Create a bedtime ritual. Performing the same relaxing activities every night—such as reading or taking a bath—tells your body it’s time to relax and go to sleep.

Keep a pen and pad of paper on the night stand. Many people can’t sleep because they’re stressed. Putting what’s on your mind onto paper can help provide closure and pave the way to sleep. Write it down and tackle it tomorrow—but go to sleep now.

Exercise every day. A brisk walk or even 10 minutes of stretching at your desk improves blood flow and boosts energy. Aim for 30 total minutes of moderate physical activity a day.

Avoid caffeine in the afternoon. Caffeine can interrupt sleep. Reducing caffeine intake, especially close to bedtime, can help you fall asleep and stay asleep.

Eat foods rich in iron. An iron-deficient diet can cause fatigue. Eat foods like spinach, beans, turkey, broccoli and brown rice to ensure you meet daily requirements.

Get sunlight or artificial light as soon as you wake up. Researchers have found that those who were exposed to light when it was dark unconsciously reset their biological clocks to match the new light input.

Assess and track current sleep habits. Recognizing the amount of sleep along with the quality of sleep you get can help you pinpoint and address problems. Tools such as sleep assessments and the Epworth Sleepiness Scale can help quantify and assess sleep habits.

Make up for lost sleep. Make up for lost sleep as quickly as possible. If you get five hours one night, you should try to make up for it the next night or the following night.
Prioritize your schedule and cut where you can. Assess your priorities, rank their importance, and then make some decisions. For example, you could cut an hour of TV time to get some extra sleep!

Establish a regular sleep schedule. Going to sleep and waking up at roughly the same time every day can help you maintain an efficient “internal clock.”

Commit to 7 to 9 hours of sleep a night. The National Sleep Foundation recommends that adults hit this range to properly restore the brain and body. If you’re not getting this amount, chances are you will feel fatigued.

Eat three nutritious meals a day. Going without food for too long causes blood sugar levels (and thus your energy levels) to drop. Don’t skip meals—and to keep it nutritious make sure every meal contains a healthy protein and carbohydrate as well as a fruit or vegetable.

Get continuous sleep. Truly regenerative sleep will only occur when you’re sleeping for a continuous period of time. An hour here or there won’t cut it.

Avoid alcohol. Although a few glasses of wine in the evening may help you fall asleep, you sleep less deeply after drinking alcohol.

Keep your bedroom completely dark. Darkness causes your melatonin (a hormone that helps control your sleep and wake cycles) to rise and induce sleep. Close the drapes, and turn off the TV and computers!

Take a 15 to 20 minute nap. Taking a short nap during the day, even 20 minutes can help fight fatigue. Make sure you do not nap all day, as this will interfere with sleep at night. Keep the nap under one hour.

Get your pet out of the bedroom. You love your pets, but you shouldn’t sleep with them—they’ll only disturb you when you’re trying to get some shut eye.

Remember to talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.
Whether you’re going in for your routine annual check-up, an ER visit or perhaps a medical procedure, your prognosis and health—believe it or not—largely depends on how prepared you are for your visit. In fact, several significant studies clearly show that people who prepare for their health care visits get better faster, stay healthier longer and experience lower costs. To be sure, preparation is a critical component to successful medical appointments. To be fully prepared for your medical appointment, you need to:

- Bring an advocate. A trusted friend or family member can provide critical support during an appointment. If you’re already feeling sick or stressed, you may not be in the best condition to listen and fully comprehend what your physician is telling you. An advocate can take notes, act as an additional set of ears and help you to better understand what needs to be done.
Bring your personal health record. Research shows that more than 95% of a doctor’s diagnosis will be based off your personal health history. Take the time and effort to collect your health history, which includes your family’s history of illnesses and any conditions you have had or currently have. Bring a copy of this health record to every appointment you go to.

Write a list of your symptoms. Forgetting even just one small detail can make a big difference in a physician’s diagnosis and treatment. Writing down specific symptoms ensures that everything you are experiencing is communicated to your doctor.

Bring all current medications and supplements. If you fail to disclose all medications and supplements you’re taking, you run the risk of getting prescribed new drugs that could cause an adverse reaction. It’s important to actually bring these items, as opposed to just writing them down. Not only is writing all the information from a prescription time-consuming, but it can also be error-prone, as it’s difficult to write everything correctly and as it appears on the prescription.

Take a pen and paper. It’s critical to bring something to write on and something to write with. Documenting questions, concerns and to-do items helps ensure important matters aren’t left unaddressed. You can also task your advocate with taking these notes.

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**Key Questions To Ask Your Doc**

No doubt about it, the health care system is strained and physicians are extremely busy; they may not talk about specific topics unless you bring them up.

For routine preventive visits, be sure to ask these seven questions:

1. Has anything changed since my last visit?
2. Do I need to change any of my medications, vitamins or supplements?
3. Do I need any new vaccines?
4. How am I doing on my preventive screening?
5. Do I need any new diagnostic tests?
6. How would you rate my overall health on a scale of 1 to 10 and why did you choose that number?
7. What changes would I need to make in order to improve that?

These questions can prove to be absolute lifesavers in terms of getting the most out of your medical appointments. Write these questions down or simply rip out this page and bring it to your next appointment!
What’s In A Number?

COST OF TREATING A Heart Attack = $19,600

COST OF NEW RUNNING Shoes = $55

What’s In A Number?

Music and Exercise

A Dynamic Duo

We know that exercise can make you smarter. We also know that listening to music is beneficial to your health. Now we know that combining the two can prove to be a pure symphony for your brain.

Researchers from Ohio State studied patients in a cardiac rehabilitation program. Each of the participants were tested for mental performance after exercising without music, and exercising with music. On average, the participants performed more than twice as well on a verbal fluency test after listening to music while exercising than they did after exercising without the music.

Study participants listened to classical music, however researchers posit that similar benefits could be gained by listening to any kind of music while you exercise. So, create your favorite playlist whether it be jazz, rock, classical or hip hop!

Just 30 minutes of activity every day can protect your health.