

# Physical Activity Boosts Brain Health

## **Regular physical activity is good for your heart, muscles, and bones. Did you know it's good for your brain too?**

Physical activity can help you think, learn, problem-solve, and enjoy an emotional balance. It can improve memory and reduce anxiety or depression.

Regular physical activity can also reduce your risk of cognitive decline, including dementia. [One study](#) found that cognitive decline is almost twice as common among adults who are inactive compared to those who are active.

Regular physical activity can help you sleep and feel better, reduce the risk of [some common cancers](#), and add years to your life.

You don't have to be a fitness guru to reap the benefits. No matter your age or fitness level, any amount of physical activity can help.

### **What You Can Do**

Some benefits of physical activity on brain health start right after a session of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.

For the most benefit, adults need at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity weekly or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity. It doesn't have to happen in one stretch. For example, moderate-intensity activity could be broken into 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week, or smaller bouts that add up.

All adults also need muscle-strengthening activities two or more days a week. And adults 65 and older need balance activities about three days a week.

Here are four activities to help you become healthier:

- 1. Turn up the music at home and dance.**

Twisting and turning can be a fun way to be physically active.

- 2. Take active breaks.**

Break up your sedentary time with physical activity. For example, squat or

march in place between programs while you're watching television. Or stand on one leg to improve your balance.

### 3. **Add physical activity to your daily routine.**

When shopping, park at the back of the parking lot and walk to the shop. Inside, walk around the perimeter of the store before getting what you need. Use the stairs instead of the elevator. Get off transit one stop sooner and walk to your destination. If you already walk routinely, start carrying hand weights on your treks.

### 4. **Walk the dog.**

Dogs are great walking companions and can help you have an active lifestyle. [One study](#) found that dog owners on average walk 22 minutes more every day compared to people who don't own a dog. You can even try going a little further on walks with your dog.

Remember that some activity is better than none, and every little bit counts. Even some chores such as raking and bagging leaves, using a lawn mower, or vacuuming can help you get active.

Get started by keeping track of your daily activities for one week with this [diary](#). Think about times throughout the day you could be physically active and make those times a regular part of your daily or weekly schedule. Find more tips to fit physical activity into your day with [Move Your Way](#).

## **Health Care Providers Can Help Too**

Health care providers play an important role in helping patients become more physically active to improve their health. They can:

- **Educate patients** about the connection between physical activity and physical and mental health.
- **Encourage patients** to move more and sit less to meet the [physical activity guidelines](#). Adults who are not able to meet the physical activity guidelines need to do whatever regular physical activity they can. For example, patients with cognitive decline may need to walk with their caregivers rather than walk alone.
- **Prescribe programs** such as [SilverSneakers](#), [EnhanceFitness](#), and [Fit and Strong](#) that may help reduce barriers for older adults. Connect patients to physical activity resources.

## For More Information

- [Measuring Physical Activity Intensity](#)
- [Physical Activity for Adults With Chronic Conditions and Disabilities](#)
- [Making Physical Activity Part of an Older Adult's Life](#)
- Podcast: [The Importance of Physical Activity for Older Adults](#) or [La importancia de la actividad física para los adultos mayores](#)
- Benefits of Healthy Eating
  - [For adults](#)
  - [For children](#)
- [Physical Activity and Your Health](#)

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