



Improving Brain Health

Saint Alphonsus Memory Center
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Saint Alphonsus
A Member of Trinity Health

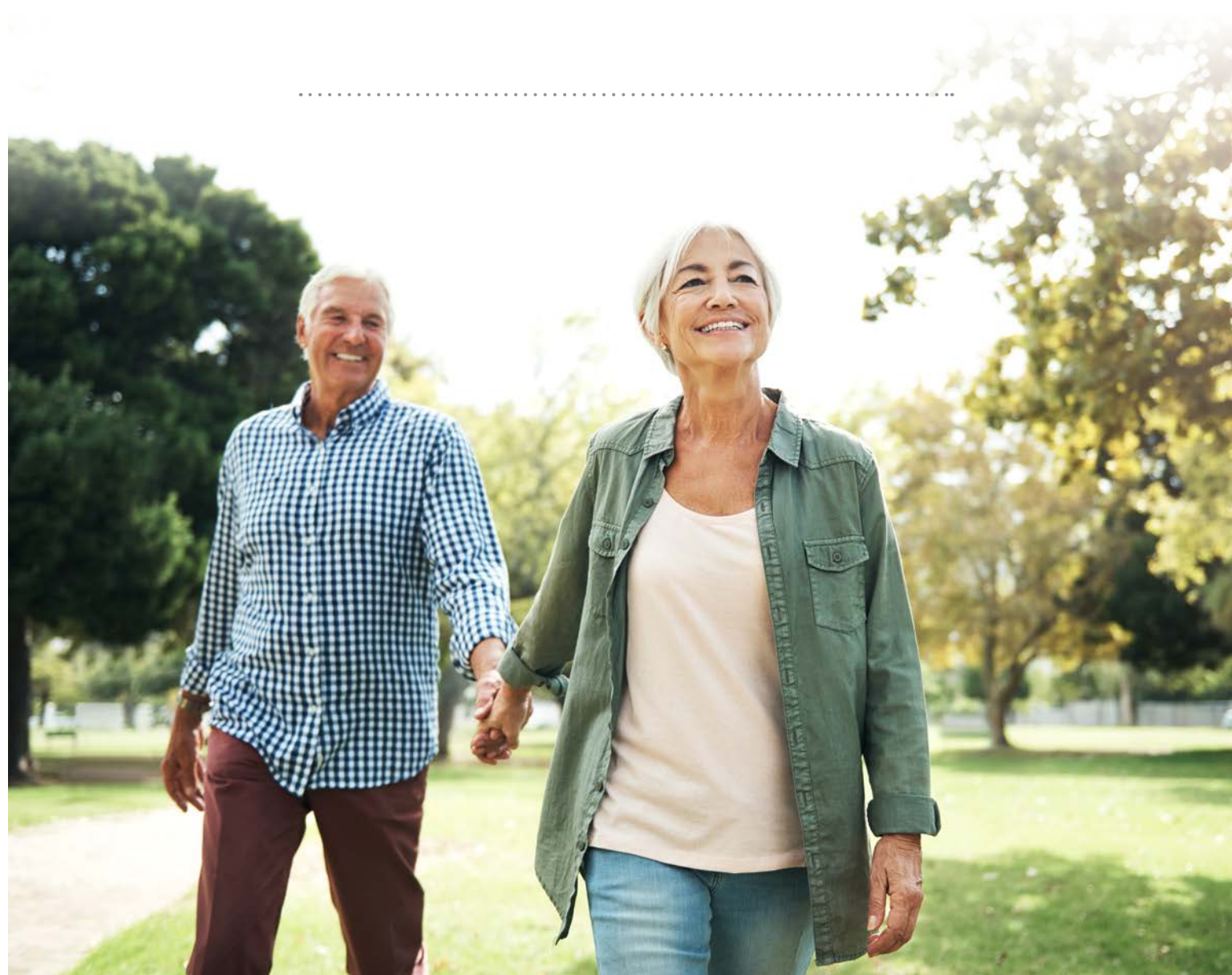
Modifiable Risk Factors for Dementia

MYTH:

You cannot reduce your risk of future dementia.

TRUTH:

You CAN reduce your risk by comprehensively and vigorously addressing any and all modifiable risk factors.



Which Risk Factors Do I Possess?

I Would Like to Take the Following Actions:

- High Blood Pressure
- Diabetes
- High Body Weight
- Brain Injury
- Inadequate Exercise
- Less Social
- Smoking
- Increased Alcohol Use
- Hearing Impairment
- Depression
- Mental Inactivity
- Air Pollution
- Poor Sleep*

*Not an evidenced-based modifiable risk factor, but evidence that harmful proteins are cleared from the brain during sleep suggests a strong role in prevention.

Physical Exercise for a Healthy Brain

Exercise provides a whole range of benefits, including for your brain. Regular physical activity has been proven to improve memory, attention, and overall function.¹ And, over time, staying active through things like walking, dancing, yoga, and other exercise could help lower your risk of cognitive decline.² Find the right activities, create a routine, start slowly and build up, engage with others, and ask your doctor about any concerns.



YOU CAN TAKE ACTION

Try these tips to jumpstart healthy exercise habits that will help keep your brain fit:

- **Find the right activities.** Everyone, at every age, can stay active—you just need to find the right activities. Older adults should get at least 2½ hours per week of moderate aerobic exercise, such as walking, jogging, swimming, dancing, or biking.³ You can also try flexibility and balance activities, like yoga or tai chi, and strength activities, like resistance training or at-home workouts.
- **Create a routine.** Establishing a regular exercise schedule will bring you the greatest brain health benefits. Find times that are the most convenient, such as early in the morning or later in the day. If you don't have much time, try several short, 10-minute periods of walking or other moderate exercise. Overall, older adults should try to be active at least 3 days per week.
- **Start slowly and build up.** If you're just starting a new exercise routine, begin with what feels comfortable, and then slowly add more time and intensity. This will help you avoid injury and find a routine that you can keep doing every week.
- **Engage with friends, family, or classes.** Exercising with family or friends can be fun, energizing, and help you get into a routine. You can also sign up for group classes through a gym or community organization.
- **Ask your doctor about concerns or chronic conditions.** If you have any specific questions or concerns about exercise, ask your doctor or another health professional. They can help with a safe, effective plan, even if you or a loved one has a chronic condition like arthritis, COPD, or diabetes.

1. <https://cp.neurology.org/content/8/3/257>

2. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(15\)60461-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(15)60461-5/fulltext)

3. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/how-older-adults-can-get-started-exercise>

Source: UsAgainstAlzheimer's

The MIND Diet for Health Brain Aging

The Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay (MIND) diet is a hybrid of the Mediterranean and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diets.

Several studies have identified that following the MIND diet may help reduce the risk for developing dementia. To what extent the MIND diet provides benefit for cognition is still being debated in the medical community, but in one study, close adherence to the MIND diet appeared to reduce the risk of Alzheimer's dementia by as much as 53%.

THINGS TO INCORPORATE INTO YOUR DIET

- Green leafy vegetables (at least 6 servings a week)
- Other vegetables (at least 1 a day)
- Nuts (5 servings a week)
- Berries (2 or more servings a week)
- Beans (at least 3 servings a week)
- Whole grains (3 or more servings a day)
- Fish (at least 1 serving a week)
- Poultry (2 servings a week)
- Olive oil (use as in cooking and dressings)

THINGS TO LIMIT IN YOUR DIET

- Red meat (less than 4 servings a week)
- Butter and margarine (less than 1 teaspoon daily)
- Cheese (less than 1 serving a week)
- Pastries and sweets (less than 5 servings a week)
- Fried or fast food (less than 1 serving a week)



Source: "MIND Diet Associated with Reduced Incidence of Alzheimer's Disease." <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4532650/>

Join the 5 Connection Challenge!

Do you want to improve your mental and physical health? Deepen your friendships? Boost your immunity?

JOIN THE CHALLENGE

One of the important factors for long-term happiness and health is our relationships. We're asking everyone to take 5 actions over 5 days to express gratitude, offer support, or ask for help. How will you reach out and connect?



USE THIS SPACE TO REFLECT ON YOUR 5 FOR 5 CHALLENGE EXPERIENCE

	How I Connected Today	How the Connection Made Me Feel
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		

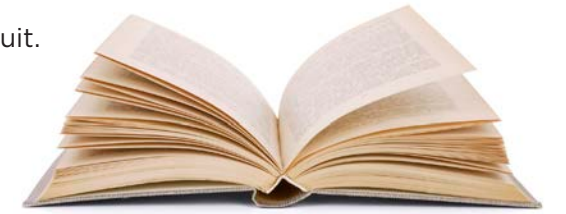
Source: Office of the U.S Surgeon General. SurgeonGeneral.gov/challenge

Stay Mentally Active

IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL FITNESS

Researchers at Stanford University (USA) found that memory loss can be improved by 30 to 50 percent simply by doing mental exercises. The brain is like a muscle—if you don't give it regular workouts, its functions will decline. Suggestions include:

- Keep up your social life and engage in plenty of stimulating conversations.
- Read newspapers, magazines, and books.
- Play “thinking” games like Scrabble, cards, and Trivial Pursuit.
- Take a course on a subject that interests you.
- Cultivate a new hobby.
- Learn a language.
- Do crossword puzzles and word games.
- Play games that challenge the intellect and memory, such as chess.
- Watch “question and answer” game shows on television, and play along with the contestants.
- Hobbies such as woodwork can improve the brain's spatial awareness.
- Keep stress under control with meditation and regular relaxation, since an excess of stress hormones like cortisol can be harmful to neurons.



BOOST YOUR MEMORY

Good recall is a learned skill. There are ways to improve a failing memory no matter what your age. Suggestions include:

- Make sure you're paying attention to whatever it is you want to remember. For example, if you're busy thinking about something else, you might not notice where you're putting the house keys.
- Use memory triggers, like association or visualization techniques. For example, link a name you want to remember with a mental picture.
- Practice using your memory. For example, try to remember short lists, such as a grocery list. Use memory triggers to help you “jump” from one item to the next. One type of memory trigger is a walking route that you know well. Mentally attach each item on your list to a landmark along the route. For example, imagine putting the bread at the mailbox, the apples at the next-door neighbor's house, and the meat at the bus stop. To remember the list, you just have to “walk” the route in your mind.

Source: Australia. State of Victoria. Healthy Ageing – Stay Mentally Active. Fact Sheet. Available freely on the Internet.

STOP Smile GO Relaxation

STOP Smile GO is a technique that uses diaphragmatic breathing to increase relaxation and mental well-being.



- S** ▶ Stop everything you are doing and close your eyes.
- T** ▶ Take 10 slow, deep belly breaths with exhalation longer than inhalation.
- O** ▶ Observe your chest and belly moving.
- P** ▶ Pause, then return to regular breathing.



Smile ▶ Give a big smile to the universe. A fake smile is totally okay.



- G** ▶ Express gratitude to your breath: "Hello Breath, my old friend. Thank you for relaxing me again."
- O** ▶ Open your eyes and get back to what you were doing.

PRACTICE DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

To begin diaphragmatic or belly breathing, get in a comfortable position, breathe in through the nose, and breathe out through the mouth. As you do this, the belly comes out during inhalation and goes in during exhalation.

By the end of this mind-body exercise, you will experience a:

- Reduction in the stress hormone (cortisol)
- Lower heart rate
- Reduction in blood pressure
- Improvement in immune function and insulin signaling
- Strengthening of the prefrontal cortex (CEO of the brain)

Practice this breathing technique once every hour on easy days or longer on more challenging days.

Inspired by Zev Schuman-Olivier, MD. STOP ACHE GO. Chacmc.org

Source: Abhilash Desai, MD. Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health in Nursing Facilities. NursingHomeBehavioralHealth.org

Crafting S.M.A.R.T. Goal Statements

Setting goals helps you identify what you want to achieve. Crafting S.M.A.R.T. goals will help you ensure that your goals are both realistic and ambitious, and that you consider all the relevant details that will help to ensure the successful fruition of your goals. Take time to thoughtfully complete the questions below. Each question is designed to give you greater clarity around what you wish to accomplish and what will allow you to achieve your goal.

Initial Goal: Write the goal you have in mind.

SPECIFIC:

What do you want to accomplish? Who should be included? What information would be helpful for them to know? Why should achieving this outcome be prioritized?

MEASURABLE:

How can you measure progress? How will you know if you've successfully met your goal?

ACHIEVABLE:

Do you have the skills required to achieve this goal? If not, can you obtain them? What resources do you need to accomplish this goal? Do you have access to these resources? If not, can you improvise? What is the motivation that's driving this goal? Is the amount of effort required on par with what the goal will achieve?

Crafting S.M.A.R.T. Goal Statements

RELEVANT:

Why should you set this goal now? Does this goal align with what gives your life quality, meaning, and/or value?

.....

TIME-BOUND:

What is the deadline? Is this timeline realistic?

.....

S.M.A.R.T. GOAL

Review your responses to the previous questions and use this information to craft a new S.M.A.R.T. goal statement below.

Note: When writing your S.M.A.R.T. goals, provide evidence of forward motion and progress towards the outcome.

Sample language:

- Increase (*engagement, effectiveness, commitment*)
 - Provide (*support, encouragement*)
 - Improve (*efficiency, tracking*)
 - Decrease (*negative self-talk, pessimistic inner dialogue*)
 - Save (*time, resources, energy*)
-



Crafting S.M.A.R.T. Goal Statements

BREAK YOUR GOALS INTO ACTIONABLE TASKS

Identify the specific tasks associated with each of your goals and describe the timeframe, resources, milestones, and measurable results for each.

FINALIZED S.M.A.R.T. GOAL

Rewrite your S.M.A.R.T. goal here:

.....



TASK 1:

.....

Timeframe	Resources	Milestones	Measurable Results

.....

Crafting S.M.A.R.T. Goal Statements

TASK 2:

Timeframe	Resources	Milestones	Measurable Results

TASK 3:

Timeframe	Resources	Milestones	Measurable Results

Source: Harvard Longwood Campus Office of Employee Development and Wellness

Taking Care of My Health or Well-being

My health or well-being goal is: _____

MAKE AN ACTION PLAN

Is there anything you'd like to do for your health or well-being in the next week or two? If there isn't anything you'd like to do for your health or well-being right now, you might want to consider this again in the future. If yes, fill in the following details. Some of these may not apply. Try to be as specific as possible.

My Action Plan	My Answers	Comments
What would you like to do?		
Where?		
When and how often? What time of day? If it happens more than once, how often will it happen?		
How long or how much? Minutes, servings, etc.?		
When will you start?		

Taking Care of My Health or Well-being

REVIEW YOUR PLAN

1. How sure or confident are you that you will be able to accomplish your plan?

Not sure at all 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very sure

2. If you chose 6 or lower, how might you change your plan to make it possible to raise your number to 7 or higher? _____

CHECK HOW YOU ARE DOING

I will do this myself.

I will check with someone else (a family member or a healthcare team member).

Who is that person? _____

How and when would you like to check in (i.e., in a week or a day, by phone, or in person)?

Adjust your plan as needed. Remember to celebrate things that went well!

Source: CCMI, www.centreCMI.ca



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