

Health & Wellness

# The Exercise – Brain Connection

*The body and mind are so closely linked, when your body feels better so, too, will your mind.*



Exercise to keep your body healthy and improve your brain (and mental) health at the same time. How does this work? Exercise:

- Increases the blood flow to your brain, delivering more oxygen and nutrients to brain cells as your heart pumps to keep up with your activity.

- Has been linked to the generation of new brain cells, a process known as neurogenesis. This process can help improve cognitive function and can counteract age-related cognitive decline.
- Promotes the release of neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine. These chemicals are involved in regulating mood, stress response, and cognitive function. Regular exercise helps maintain a healthy balance of these neurotransmitters, contributing to overall brain health. You have improved concentration, and better mood regulation if you exercise.
- Reduces chronic inflammation and risk of ill-health. Chronic inflammation in the brain has been associated with various neurological conditions, including Alzheimer's disease and depression. Exercise has anti-inflammatory effects throughout the body, including the brain.
- Promotes brain plasticity. Brain plasticity refers to the brain's ability to adapt and reorganize itself in response to experiences and environmental changes. Increased plasticity supports learning, memory formation, and overall cognitive function.
- Reduces stress by triggering the release of endorphins, often referred to as "feel-good" hormones, which can alleviate stress and improve mood. Chronic stress can impair cognitive function and contribute to the development of mental health disorders.
- Can promote better sleep quality and duration, which is essential for brain health. During sleep, the brain consolidates memories, clears toxins, and undergoes various repair processes. By improving sleep patterns, exercise indirectly supports optimal brain function.

What exercise should you do? Any activity is good, but walking is particularly good for your brain because you use so many muscles in your body when you walk. This is why people who live in "Blue Zones" (areas of the world where people tend to live to old age) are known to retain not only physical longevity but also cognitive health. The people in these zones walk as a daily part of life. So get up and getting moving for your brain and your body!