

# 7 Steps to Keep Your Brain Healthy and Mind Sharp

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Keep your brain healthy and your mind sharp! Americans are living longer than ever before, but with longer life comes concerns about maintaining vitality, and retaining one's mental fitness. The good news is that we can make choices to slow the decline in vitality and keep our brains healthy and minds sharp.

Below are seven simple steps you can take to maintain your health and prevent late onset Alzheimer's dementia:

1. **Regular physical exercise** (check with your doctor before starting an exercise regimen): Regular exercise causes the body to produce a variety of factors that reduce inflammation, improve insulin sensitivity, turn on proteins in the brain that cause the brain to make new neurons and new neuron-to-neuron connections. Older persons who began walking daily experienced a 2% growth in the memory circuits of their brain, which effectively reversed two years of aging.
2. **Anti-Inflammatory diet:** Dietary patterns, which are rich in fruits, nuts, vegetables, and oily fish, have been shown to decrease inflammation, improve clearance of by-products of metabolism from the brain, and not only improve overall health, but reduce dementia risk. Avoiding highly

processed foods that have trans-fats, high sugar, and high fructose corn syrup reduces inflammation and thereby reduces risk of dementia.

3. **Avoid artificial sweeteners and sugary drinks:** All artificial sweeteners studied increased the risk of Alzheimer's dementia. Drink 100% natural juices or water, which flush the system of by-products of metabolism. Juices provide polyphenols that reduce inflammation and protect the brain.
4. **Sleep 7-8 hours each night:** The brain comprises approximately 2% of the body's mass, yet uses 20% of the body's energy. This means it is highly metabolic, with many waste products that need to be cleared. It is during sleep that the neurons contract to expel these waste products into the cerebrospinal fluid for clearance from the brain. It is also during sleep that memories consolidate. Thus, sleep deprivation increases oxidative damage to the brain and impairs memory formation.
5. **Walk in the grass or touch the earth regularly:** The human body is not only physical, with fats, proteins, DNA, and various chemical reactions, but it is also electrical. And just like the body needs balanced nutrition for its physical components, so too the body needs balanced electrical processing. The earth is a giant electron donor that provides electrons to our bodies when we touch it. These electrons activate the body's anti-inflammatory enzymes, lower blood pressure, and reduce inflammation. Since the 1960's, with modern plastics and other man-made building and paving materials and modern shoes, we have disconnected from the earth, with subsequent increased inflammation. So, walk in the grass, wade in the ocean, "hug a tree," and touch the earth regularly!
6. **Get out into nature:** Studies show that people who regularly visit natural settings, walk in the forest, camp in the woods, or spend time in nature have less stress, less stress hormones, lower heart rate, lower blood pressures, and overall improved health. These actions reduce the activation of the body's stress circuitry and have long term health benefits that include reducing your risk of dementia.
7. **Meditate daily for 15 minutes on a God of love:** Brain science shows that quieting the mind for 15 minutes each day, with relaxed posture, slow breathing, and focusing on some aspect of altruism, benevolence, or love, calms the brain's stress circuits. Those who meditate regularly have lower heart rates, blood pressure, need less pain medicine after surgery, recover more quickly after surgery, and have better concentration, attention, memory, and lower rates of dementia.

While aging is inevitable, disability and dementia are not! Make choices today to maintain your health, vitality, and abilities as you age. For more helpful actions to protect your brain and keep your mind sharp, get a copy of *The Aging Brain: Proven Steps to Prevent Dementia and Sharpen Your Mind*. It is filled with many more science-based actions you can take to stay sharp while you age and each point above is expanded with more evidence, explanation, and references.