

The Best Exercises to Keep Your Brain Sharp

Improving your brain health is as easy as making small changes to your daily lifestyle.

Exercising your mind through games, social activity, and exercise is one of the best ways to preserve brain function. But what if you need extra assistance due to Alzheimer's, dementia, or cognitive decline? That's where SAIDO Learning comes in. SAIDO enriches the lives of individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's and Dementia through an individualized approach. The goal of SAIDO Learning is to not only provide care, but to improve each resident's quality of life through intentional engagement opportunities.



The SAIDO program consists of precise, yet simple, arithmetic, writing, and reading exercises. Baseline diagnostic testing identifies the right level for each participant, who then participate in five sessions a week for 30 minutes. The SAIDO Learning software records follow-up testing at six- and 12-month intervals and documents progress.

But even if you don't need extra assistance, it's important to keep your brain healthy. Learn some of the best ways to keep your brain healthy through games, social activity, and exercise:

- **Arts and crafts:** A great way to involve your hands and mind, arts and crafts can be a fun way to let your creative side shine through. Creating gifts for loved ones, or even wall art for your apartment will not only keep your mind busy, but it is also a lot of fun!
- **Jigsaw puzzles:** Puzzles are a great way to keep your mind active. The benefits to completing a jigsaw puzzle include helping older adults relax and stimulating the mind. Start out with puzzles that have fewer pieces and then gradually increase the difficulty level for a challenge.
- **Play chess:** Chess is a game about strategy and forethought, which is why it's a great game to help stimulate your brain. Chess may seem like a difficult game to pick up, but with a little practice you can catch on in no time. Chess is also available to play online, so if you don't have someone to play with, or you want to brush up on your skills, explore virtual chess sites to compete against players all over the world!

Brain Health Benefits of Staying Social:

- **Longevity:** People who have more support socially, whether from family, friends, or caretakers, often live longer than those who may not have that social support. Social interaction has been proven to extend lifespan, even after accounting for other health problems.
- **Reduces the risk for depression:** Low social support from family and friends can be associated with chronic depression. As we age, it's important to socialize with those around you so that you don't isolate yourself. When people isolate themselves, they tend to become depressed more easily, which leads to further isolation.
- **Delays the onset of dementia:** Recently, there has been more evidence that socializing is good for your brain health, especially memory. People with more active social lives may be less likely to develop dementia and other mental health issues than those who are more socially isolated.

Exercises for Brain Health:

- **Aerobic Exercise:** Aerobic exercises like brisk walking or gardening help boost blood flow to the brain which in turn boosts the side of the brain's hippocampus. The hippocampus is the part of the brain that helps with verbal memory and learning.
- **Stretching:** Stretching on a daily basis to improve flexibility can be beneficial for your brain health. Static stretching can improve blood circulation to the brain and help to reduce stress.
- **Chair Yoga:** Yoga not only helps to better your balance, it helps to relax your mind in a meditative state reducing anxiety and depression.

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