

Five Essential Habits

FOR A HEALTHY BRAIN

By: Madam Nur Sabiha Md Hussin

The human brain is the command center for the nervous system, enabling thoughts, memory, movement, and emotions through a complex function that represents the pinnacle of human biological evolution (Maldonado KA & Alsayouri K, 2023). Brain health is defined as the ability to perform cognitive processes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). According to the American Heart Association, optimal brain health refers to the level of performance considered average for individuals of a certain age without any known brain or organ system disorders. It can be assessed by the degree of cognitive function decline or the ability to carry out desired activities (Gorelick et al., 2017).

Maintaining brain health throughout life is crucial for achieving overall health and longevity. As the population ages, the prevalence of neurological disorders increases, making the preservation of brain health even more challenging (Steinmetz et al., 2024). Therefore, it is essential to recognize the importance of brain health, along with its preservation and the prevention of brain-related conditions. Despite genetic and other non-modifiable factors, some lifestyle changes were proven to delay cognitive derangement in dementia cases for up to 40% (Livingston et al., 2020). Therefore, here are the "Five Healthy Habits for Your Brain" to encourage a healthy lifestyle for brain care.

5 HABITS OF IMPROVING

BRAIN HEALTH

1 Engage in Mental & Cognitive Activities



2 Be physically active



3 Keep a healthy diet



4 Get enough & quality sleep



5 Quit smoking



5 Habits of Improving BRAIN HEALTH

1 Engage in Mental and Cognitive Activities

Regularly challenging the brain with activities such as puzzles, reading, learning new skills, and playing strategy games can help maintain and improve cognitive functions. These activities stimulate neural connections, enhance memory, and promote problem-solving abilities, contributing to overall brain health (Alzheimer's Association, 2024).

2 Quit smoking

Quitting smoking can improve brain health. Over time it can also decrease the risk of having a stroke and developing brain conditions such as dementia. Mental health issues such as difficulty sleeping, anxiety, stress, and depression may be improved by quitting smoking (Restifo et al., 2022).

3 Be physically active

Physical activity aids in the prevention and control of chronic illnesses, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity. For older persons, other advantages include a decreased likelihood of falling, an extended period of living independently, and enhanced brain function (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024).

4 Maintain a healthy diet

Keeping a controlled blood pressure level and blood sugar level is crucial. This could be achieved through eating a balanced diet with more vegetables, lean proteins, and less processed foods that can help reduce the risk of cognitive decline (Zhang et al., 2024).

5 Get enough and quality sleep

Sleep disturbances, both in terms of quantity and quality, are strongly linked to neurological conditions such as stroke, cognitive decline, dementia, and Parkinson's disease. They are also associated with a higher risk of developing mental health disorders like depression and anxiety (American Heart Association, 2024). Therefore, improving sleep quality may enhance mental acuity and overall brain function.

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