



## Sharpen Your Mind

### Did You Know?

Research suggests eating foods rich in these nutrients can boost brain fitness.

- An omega-3 fatty acid called DHA found in fatty fish may help reduce chances of developing dementia in later years.
- High levels of vitamin D may improve cognitive flexibility as well as reasoning skills.
- B vitamins may be vital for brain and nerve cell function and cell and tissue growth.



Photo by: [Tony Bowden/Flickr](#)

Prepare, Oct 2014

In addition to being *physically* fit, research shows that mental fitness is essential to ensure high functioning throughout your lifetime. Try these strategies to keep your mind at the top of its game.

#### 1. Skip the routine.

To make life easier, your brain picks the simplest way to solve life's challenges. Yet, this may not always be the best answer. Change up your routine every once in a while, or make purposeful efforts to do something in a new way.

#### 2. Continue learning.

Lifelong learning helps us create and maintain neural pathways to keep our minds running strong. Make learning fun by picking up a new instrument, joining a reading group, or taking dance lessons.

#### 3. Keep active.

Physical activity increases oxygen supply to the brain, which may potentially ward off cognitive impairment from aging. In addition, finding activities that involve mental skill and balance may improve both parts of your game, such as dancing or riding a bike.

#### 4. Stay social.

Limiting social isolation may help reduce your risk of mental decline. In addition to your close friends and family, try reaching out regularly to a variety of people for extra mental stimulation.

#### 5. Take a nap instead of drinking more caffeine.

Ninety percent of Americans use caffeine daily, some substituting it for sleep. While the stimulant can enhance alertness and concentration, it may also impair motor learning and verbal memory. In contrast, daytime naps, like nighttime sleep, have been shown to benefit alertness *and* enhance memory. If possible, find short breaks in your busy life and recharge with 15 minute power naps.

Like a muscle, the brain needs regular exercise and rest or it can lose its effectiveness overtime. Give these tips a shot for the workout your brain needs.