



WELLNESS CONNECTION

Healthy Body, Healthier Brain



Brain health and physical health are both important, especially as we age. A recent study found that people with one or more chronic health conditions were more likely to report worsening or more frequent memory problems, also called subjective cognitive decline (SCD).

Chronic health conditions included in the report were diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, and kidney disease. SCD was most common among adults with COPD or heart disease, or who had a stroke.

Worsening or more frequent confusion or memory loss, combined with chronic health conditions, can make it especially hard to live independently and do everyday activities like cooking, cleaning, managing health conditions and medicines, and keeping medical appointments. This may lead to worse health, and preventable hospitalizations or more severe memory loss or confusion. In some cases, SCD may put people at greater risk for Alzheimer's disease.

What Can People With Memory Loss and Chronic Health Conditions Do?

It's important to talk to your healthcare provider. Researchers found that only half of adults with SCD and a chronic condition had discussed their memory loss with a health care professional. Early diagnosis of memory loss is especially important for people with chronic health conditions. Getting

checked by your healthcare provider can help determine if the symptoms you are experiencing are related to dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, or a more treatable condition such as a vitamin deficiency or medication side effects. Early diagnosis also provides an opportunity to participate in clinical trials, and more time to plan for the future.

Ways to Help Improve Your Brain Health

There is growing scientific evidence that healthy behaviors, which have been shown to prevent cancer, diabetes, and heart disease, also may reduce risk for SCD. Here are steps you can take for a healthy body and healthier brain.

- Quit smoking – quitting smoking now, improves your health and reduces your risk of heart disease, cancer, lung disease, and other smoking-related illnesses.
Free quitline: 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).
- Prevent and manage high blood pressure – Tens of millions of adults in the United States have high blood pressure, and many do not have it under control.
- Prevent and manage high cholesterol – Nearly 1 in 3 American adults has high cholesterol.
- Maintain a healthy weight – Healthy weight isn't about short-term dietary changes. Instead, it's about a lifestyle that includes healthy eating and regular physical activity.
- Get enough sleep – A third of American adults report that they usually get less sleep than the recommended amount.
- Stay engaged – There are many ways for older adults to get involved in their local community.
- Manage blood sugar and if you drink, do so in moderation.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/healthy-body-brain.html>



Healthy Sleep Habits



Sleep is often the first thing that busy people squeeze out of their schedules. Making time to sleep will help you protect your health and well-being now and in the future.

To improve your sleep habits, it also may help to:

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. For children, have a set bedtime and a bedtime routine. Don't use the child's bedroom for time outs or punishment.
- Try to keep the same sleep schedule on weeknights and weekends. Limit the difference to no more than about an hour. Staying up late and sleeping in late on weekends can disrupt your body clock's sleep-wake rhythm.
- Use the hour before bed for quiet time. Avoid intense exercise and bright artificial light, such as from a TV or computer screen. The light may signal the brain that it's time to be awake.
- Avoid heavy or large meals within a few hours of bedtime. (Having a light snack is okay.) Also, avoid alcoholic drinks before bed.

- Avoid nicotine (for example, cigarettes) and caffeine (including caffeinated soda, coffee, tea, and chocolate). Nicotine and caffeine are stimulants, and both substances can interfere with sleep. The effects of caffeine can last up to 8 hours. So, a cup of coffee in the late afternoon can make it hard for you to fall asleep at night.
- Spend time outside every day (when possible) and be physically active.
- Keep your bedroom quiet, cool, and dark (a dim night light is fine, if needed).

Strategies for Shift Workers

Some people have schedules that conflict with their internal body clocks. For example, shift workers may have trouble getting enough sleep. This can affect how they feel mentally and physically.

If you're a shift worker, you may find it helpful to:

- Keep the lights bright at work
- Limit shift changes so your body clock can adjust
- Limit caffeine use to the first part of your shift
- Remove sound and light distractions in your bedroom during daytime sleep

If you're still not able to fall asleep during the day or have problems adapting to a shift-work schedule, talk with your doctor about other options to help you sleep.

Source: <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/sleep-deprivation/healthy-sleep-habits>

Practicing Gratitude

Gratitude is a state of thankfulness and appreciation for the positive things in life that are valuable and meaningful to you. This can range from appreciating a beautiful sunset to feeling grateful about recovering from an illness. Research shows that gratitude may improve your emotional well-being by helping you cope with stress.

When you make gratitude a regular habit, it can help you learn to recognize good things in your life even when bad things happen. Here are some habits to help you integrate gratitude into your daily life.

- Reflect. Take a moment to think about the positive things that happened during the day.
- Journal. Write down a favorite moment from your day, a special person in your life, or five things you're grateful for each day.

- Relive the good times. Think about positive moments and good memories and consider sharing them with others.
- Write to someone. Write a letter to someone you feel thankful for. Even if you don't send it, it is good to document these positive feelings about people you care about.
- Volunteer. Help others and reflect on your own circumstances to develop a sense of compassion for others.



Source: <https://www.dhs.gov/employee-resources/blog/2021/09/14/practicing-gratitude>