

Taking Charge of Your Brain Health

Reduce Stress

The human brain, sometimes called the “3 pound universe within,” is one of your most vital organs. It plays a role in every action and every thought and just like the rest of your body, it needs to be looked after. By making healthy lifestyle choices now, you may be able to reduce your risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease and improve your brain’s ability to sustain long-term health.

This sheet is part of a series that provides practical action steps, based on current research, which you can take to improve your brain health. Will it prevent Alzheimer’s disease? There are no guarantees, but healthy lifestyle choices will help keep your brain as healthy as possible as you age. And since a healthier brain can withstand illness better, it’s important to take action on the things you can control -- lifestyle choices.



Stress causes your body to release chemicals that are damaging to the brain and other cells in your body when it persists over time. Stress can cause vascular changes and chemical imbalances that impact the brain. By reducing the harmful effects of stress on your body, you improve your brain health and you may reduce your risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease.

It is important to identify and to try to lessen the things that cause you stress. Since you cannot always remove all stressors from your life, how you deal with stress becomes very important to your long-term health.

You can alter your internal reaction to your stressors through techniques that lessen your body’s internal stress response. Meditation, deep breathing, massage and physical exercise are examples of stress reduction techniques that are effective for many people. The key is to explore a variety of techniques and find those that help you manage stress.

Heads
Up for
Healthier
Brains

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Experiencing some stress is part of everyday life. However, if symptoms of stress persist, contact your doctor. Symptoms of chronic stress may include the following:

- Emotional: depression, tension, anxiety, anger, worry, fear
- Physical: headache, fatigue, insomnia, sweating
- Mental: poor concentration, memory loss, indecisiveness, confusion
- Behavioural: fidgeting, overeating, alcohol and drug abuse

Take Action to Reduce Stress

- Take personal time for yourself. Exercise, relaxation, entertainment, hobbies and socializing are essential parts of our health and well-being. Everyone needs to find a balance that limits stress and helps maintain optimal health.
- Identify unrealistic expectations and try to accept what can not be changed.
- Seek and accept support.
- Utilize a variety of stress reduction methods.
- Prepare ahead – new or unfamiliar situations can create stress and anxiety.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Laugh.

Note: Your abilities, health situation and interests should be taken into consideration when choosing brain healthy activities. If you have questions about your own situation, speak to your doctor or health-care provider.

Alzheimer *Society* T O R O N T O

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