

Action for Positive Brain Health Now

7

Simple Tips for Better Brain Health

Why is it important to focus on brain health?

Mild problems with thinking and memory are common in those living with HIV. The causes are not yet clear, but there are several steps you can take to protect and optimize your brain health.

What is good for the body is also good for the brain. A healthy lifestyle, engaging in interesting activities, exercising, managing stress and getting enough sleep all help to keep your brain healthy.

Take a look at the 7 tips in this document. These are tips that anyone can use, but only you know what is most important and relevant to your own life.

Begin by choosing one area where you think you could start making a difference today. Check out the recommended website or call the number provided for more information on what to do and how to get started. Set a realistic goal and give it a try for just a week or two. You may be surprised by how easy it is to build a healthier brain starting right now.

1. Stop Smoking

Nicotine is a powerful drug that changes the brain as well as the body. While smoking may briefly boost mood and energy, this effect fades quickly, leaving smokers feeling tired, "down", and craving another cigarette. Smoking reduces how much oxygen gets to the brain, and increases the risk of brain damage from stroke.

It's never too late to stop smoking and enjoy the health benefits that will follow. After just two days of not smoking, brain function begins to improve and risk of stroke is reduced.

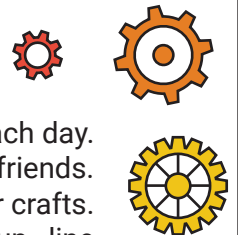
For tools to help you quit, visit:
The Canadian Cancer Society's
website (www.smokershelpline.ca)
or call their smokers' helpline
toll free at 1-877 513-5333.



For more information on the effects of smoking,
visit: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/tobac-tabac/quit-cesser/index-eng.php>

If you only make one of the changes suggested here, this should be the one!

2. Challenge your Mind



Do mentally challenging activities each day. Play cards or board games with friends. Nurture creativity through hobbies or crafts. Learn a new language or take up line dancing!

For more ways to stimulate your mind, visit:
<http://alzheimer.ca/en/Home/About-dementia/Brain-health>

3. Social Engagement

Keep in contact with your friends and relatives. Research shows that people who connect with friends or family in meaningful ways every day live longer and live better. Leave your computer and join a club, rally for a cause, volunteer, or take a walk with a friend.



4.

Move Your Body

Brain health is directly tied to physical health. Exercise can help you think more clearly and may protect against cognitive decline.

You can improve your health with as little as 2.5 hours of moderate to vigorous activity each week. Play a sport, walk briskly, jog, swim or bike – even sessions as short as 10 minutes repeated through the week can make a big difference to your brain and body. Get stronger by adding exercises such as push-ups, leg squats and crunches two or three times a week.

For ways to get active, visit:

<http://www.catie.ca/en/practical-guides/managing-your-health/4#exercise>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/being-active/physical-activity-your-health.html>



5.

Manage Stress & Negative Moods

You can't eliminate stress, but you can learn to identify sources of stress and respond in healthier ways. Reduce your stress by setting realistic goals and managing your time effectively.

Deep breathing and other relaxation techniques, mindfulness meditation, and physical activity can help quiet the body and the mind. Yoga and other mind-body activities can promote mental and physical relaxation.



Anxiety and depression will affect your memory and your ability to think clearly. Speak with your healthcare provider if you feel anxious or sad most of the time for two or more weeks. Effective treatments include regular physical activity, short-term talk therapy or medication.

To learn more about managing stress and negative moods, visit:

<http://www.catie.ca/en/practical-guides/emotional-wellness>

6.

Get A Good Night's Sleep

Your brain is very active during sleep. A good night's sleep helps improve memory and the ability to learn new information.



Develop a healthy sleep routine: Go to bed at the same time every night. Avoid naps during the day. Limit stimulants like coffee, cola and even chocolate, and avoid them entirely after 4 pm. Avoid large meals or strenuous exercise close to bedtime.

Talk with your doctor if you have trouble falling asleep, wake too early in the morning, sleep too much for two weeks or more or if your sleep is chronically poor. Loud snoring may also be a sign of a more serious sleep disorder that may need treatment.

To learn more about healthy sleep habits, visit:

<http://www.catie.ca/en/positiveside/winter-2013/sleep-tight>

7.

Brain Detox

Many medications used to treat sleep problems, pain, or anxiety, including those available over-the-counter, can have negative effects on your memory and concentration. Review your medications with your physician. Limit your consumption of alcohol and recreational drugs.