



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Celebrating the Sunshine State

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **Today we celebrate the Sunshine State and all it has to offer residents and visitors alike.***

The State of Florida is an easy target for late-night talk hosts and comedy sketch writers. Too many old people. Crazy people do crazy things. Alligators eat sharks. It's too darn hot and humid.

But there must be some good reasons that almost 80 million people visited Florida during 2020. Beaches. Theme parks. Arts and culture. Beautiful scenery. And then there is the sunshine, which is especially valuable during the winter months, when dark and cold conditions prevail in most of the rest of the country.

There is science behind the reason we feel good soaking in the sunshine, according to a [Harvard Health](#) post. David Fisher, chief of dermatology at Harvard-affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, says that humans are literally addicted to sunshine so our skin can make Vitamin D. New evidence suggests that we get the same kick out of being in the sun that we get from any addictive substance or behavior. It stimulates the so-called "pleasure center" in the brain and releases a rush of feel-good chemicals like endorphins.

So if you're feeling down, do what tourists do: Go to the beach. Be wary, though, because too much sun long term can lead to skin cancer. If you'll be out longer than five to 10 minutes, cover up and use sunscreen.

Here are some interesting facts about Florida. Use them to distract your friends when they start making the same tired jokes about our fine state.

- Florida is home to the oldest established city in the United States. St. Augustine was founded by Spanish explorers in 1565.
- Floridian John Gorrie invented refrigeration and air conditioning in 1851. He was

inspired by the state's average temperature of 79.5 degrees.

- When you are in Florida, you are never more than 60 miles from the nearest body of salt water.
- Florida boasts more than 1,200 golf courses, more than any other state.
- Florida produces more than 70 percent of the nation's oranges and ranks No. 1 for tomatoes, grapefruit, sugarcane, snap beans, cucumbers and oranges.
- Florida is the only state to have an embassy in Washington, D.C.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Most of us spend the majority of our time indoors. Spending time outdoors has benefits for our physical and brain health, according to a [Harvard Health](#) post. Following are five benefits:

- **Your Vitamin D levels go up.** Exposing your skin to sunshine — actually, ultraviolet B (UVB) rays — enables the body to make vitamin D, which is why it's also known as the "sunshine vitamin."
- **You'll get more exercise.** If you make getting outside a priority, that means more time, walking, biking, gardening, cleaning up the yard, and other things that put the body in motion.
- **You'll be happier.** Light tends to elevate people's mood, and there's usually more light outside than inside.
- **Your concentration will improve.** ADHD studies have suggested that outdoor exercise have positive effects on the condition.
- **You may heal faster.** University of Pittsburgh researchers reported that spinal surgery patients took fewer pain medications during their recoveries when exposed to natural light.

BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:

- Stress resilience
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Social connection
- Emotional wellbeing
- Meaning and Purpose
- Cognitive stimulation and creativity
- Engaging with nature
- General health
- Positive impacts

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, uses a cutting-edge approach to protecting brain health, promoting brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is building brain healthy communities, cultures that foster brain health protective factors and address risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the ***Be Brain Healthy*** movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference.*** To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).