

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Brain Health Matters and Slowing or Preventing Alzheimer's With a Healthy Lifestyle Makes a Difference

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 fighting brain illness, like dementia, across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region. Today the BHI is talking about a brain healthy lifestyle as a protection against Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's affects more than 5 million Americans. It is a degenerative brain disease, the most common form of dementia, and is characterized by the accumulation of two types of protein in the brain: tangles (tau) and plaques (amyloid-beta). [View a short video on how this process occurs.](#) Eventually, Alzheimer's kills brain cells and takes people's lives.

Researchers believe Alzheimer's disease does not have a single cause, but likely develops from multiple factors, such as genetics, lifestyle, and environment. While risk factors like age, family history, and heredity can't be changed, emerging evidence suggests there may be other factors we can influence. According to the [Alzheimer's Association website](#), current evidence suggests that exercise, sleep, and heart-healthy eating may also help protect the brain and slow, or possibly prevent, Alzheimer's.

According to an article from [Harvard Health Publishing](#), studies show that 30-minutes of moderate physical exercise three to four times a week helps prevent the development of Alzheimer's or slows the progression in people who have symptoms. The same is true of a Mediterranean diet. A diet rich in fresh vegetables and fruits, whole grains, olive oil, nuts, legume, fish, moderate amounts of poultry, eggs, and dairy, moderate amounts of red wine, and red meat only sparingly, can also slow or prevent the development of Alzheimer's. Growing evidence suggests that improved sleep is linked to helping clear the amyloid protein from the brain.

Other lifestyle factors showing promise in preventing Alzheimer's include cognitive stimulation, or learning new things, and staying socially connected.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO *BOOST* YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Even if you don't think you can fully commit to living a brain healthier lifestyle, even small changes may help reduce your risk for developing Alzheimer's disease. Try making just one small change at a time.

- Increase your exercise routine by one day a week. Not exercising? Start with one day and build from there.
- Eliminate one unhealthy food from your diet. Nobody really needs fries.
- Go to bed half an hour earlier. Just 30 additional minutes of sleep can make a difference.
- Shut off electronics a half an hour earlier than normal.
- Listen to new music or a podcast about a new topic.
- **BE BRAIN HEALTHY.** Adopt a lifestyle that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions and language that promote:
 - Stress resilience
 - Nutrition
 - Physical activity
 - Sleep
 - Social connection
 - Emotional wellbeing
 - Meaning and Purpose
 - Cognitive stimulation and creativity
 - Engaging with nature
 - General health
 - Positive impacts

Once you make one change, try making another. Over time, they will add up.

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is a collaborative effort with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, to build brain healthy communities through education, collaboration, research, innovation, and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention and optimization of performance*. The BHI is creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the brain health movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference.*** To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).