

Healthy Heart – Healthy Brain



BRAIN HEALTH
awareness

What's Good for Your Heart is Good for Your Brain

We all understand that a healthy lifestyle, including exercise, a nutritious diet and managing stress are key components of overall physical health, but did you know that these behaviours play an important role in the health of our brains?

Research has found that regular physical activity; a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, grains and nuts; not smoking; limiting alcohol consumption; and preventing and treating diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity support brain health and appear to lower the risks of dementia, or delay its onset.

It's actually a simple concept – healthy heart equals healthy brain.

Ways to keep your brain and heart healthy include:

- **EAT A NUTRITIOUS DIET:** Healthy dietary choices not only improve your general health, in the long-term, nutritious foods help maintain brain function and can slow cognitive decline. For example, foods that reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke, such as colourful fruits and vegetables that are high in antioxidants and omega-3-rich fish and nuts, have cognitive benefits.
- **BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE:** Even moderate physical activity promotes the circulation of blood to your brain, which nourishes your cells with nutrients and oxygen. Exercise also reduces the risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol.
- **REDUCE STRESS:** Learn how to deal with stress, for example through relaxation or meditation. Stress, when it persists over time, can cause vascular changes and chemical imbalances that are damaging to the brain and other cells in the body.

- **CHALLENGE YOURSELF:** Learn a new skill, adopt a new hobby or simply change your routine to engage your brain in different ways. Studies show that activities that involve thinking and learning may be beneficial for brain health and can protect against cognitive decline.
- **BE SOCIALLY ACTIVE:** Social interactions are mentally stimulating as they require you to engage the areas of your brain involved in memory and attention. Joining a friend for a walk, playing a game with others or just having a great conversation can positively impact your brain health.

Taking steps to maintain a healthier brain and heart will improve your ability to enjoy your life while helping reduce your risk of chronic diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease and some other forms of dementia. For more information visit:

- Alzheimer Society of Alberta and Northwest Territories at www.alzheimer.ca/ab
- Alzheimer Society of Calgary at www.alzheimercalgary.ca

Visit www.seniors.alberta.ca for information on programs and services to support seniors in Alberta.