

Healthy Life... Healthy Brain

By Tricia Talerico, D.C., M.S., Nutr.



Subjective cognitive decline (SCD) is the self-reporting of worsening or frequent confusion or memory loss. It is a form of cognitive impairment and also one of the earliest noticeable symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. SCD can affect performing everyday activities like cooking or cleaning, self-care and managing chronic disease. Cognition includes processes such as the ability to learn, remember and make judgments. Cognitive decline can range from mild cognitive impairment to dementia. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia.

Dr. Daniel Amen, renowned psychiatrist and brain disorder specialist, says that we should love our brains and try to avoid things that may damage it. How should we go about doing this?

1. Take care of the "brain in your gut" or the enteric nervous system.

This nervous system is comprised of more than 100 million nerve cells lining the GI tract from your esophagus to the rectum. Your brain and gut communicate with each other all day long about digestion, swallowing, breaking down food, nutrient absorption, elimination and stress. Yes, stress! Did you know that almost 90% of our serotonin (relaxing neurotransmitter) is made in the gut? This is extremely important for stress management.

2. Exercise regularly.

Yes, physical activity actually benefits the brain. Research studies show that people who are physically active are less likely to experience a decline in mental function and have a lower risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Aiming for 30-60 minutes several times a week is a great goal.

3. Sleep and relaxation.

Sleep appears to clear abnormal proteins (beta-amyloid plaque) from the brain and consolidates memories. Restful, deep sleep also improves mood and the function of the immune system. Meditate to help manage stress.

4. Eat a Mediterranean diet.

This is a diet which emphasizes plant-based foods, fish, healthy fats (EVOO) and some whole grains. A plant-based diet includes foods rich in antioxidants which help to combat oxidative damage to brain cells. Many clients ask me for supplements that can improve their memory or their ability to recall words immediately. There are many things I can recommend, but a clean diet is the foundation for improved brain function.

5. Control medical risk factors.

These include hypertension, diabetes mellitus 2, obesity, depression, head trauma, high cholesterol and smoking.

These all substantially increase our risk for cognitive decline.

6. Participate in Mental Fitness.

This may include activities such as playing cards, chess, crossword puzzles, knitting and stimulating conversation with family and friends.

Just because we cannot always visualize the declining function of our brains, it doesn't mean it's not happening at this very moment. We cannot always control our genetic predispositions, but we can control many factors that can help keep our brains working optimally.

IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH... IMPROVE YOUR LIFE!



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