



Take proactive care of your neural pathways to help support a long, healthy retirement.

When you think fit, think brain fitness – focus on strengthening your body and your mind. The idea of losing a step or two worries many of us, especially those who find themselves forgetting things more often than they like. In most cases, occasional lapses can be attributed to stress or multitasking, which can distract your brain, causing you to become unfocused and less productive.

The good news? While there's a lot we still don't know about the brain, research has shown that the brain can benefit from activities to boost its strength, flexibility, resilience and endurance. Proactive measures may improve memory, creativity, attention span, problem-solving and, perhaps best of all, support a long, happy and healthy retirement.

New territory: Clear more neural pathways by learning a new language, instrument, skill or hobby. The challenge of the unknown boosts brain resilience, as well as memory retention, coordination and high-level thinking.

Purposeful mindset: Build endurance and resilience by defining goals for the week or the month. A reason to wake up every morning helps you transition when life changes.

Healthy habits: Promoting a healthy brain through exercise increases blood flow to the brain, reduces stress, stimulates adaptive capabilities and helps you focus. Aerobic exercise just twice a week could lower your risk of Alzheimer's by 60%.

Social circles: A meaningful social life, including volunteering, improves executive function and memory. Social interaction means more engagement and lower risk of cognitive impairments.

Restorative sleep: Sleep restores the mind, rebuilds and repairs neuron pathways, reduces stress, and helps create long-term memories. Learn good sleep habits as well as de-stressing techniques such as deep breathing or spending time with family and friends.

Sleep deprivation impairs quality and accuracy of work (31%), clear thinking or judgment (31%) and memory of important details (30%).

Lifelong learning: A lifelong habit of learning and engaging in mentally challenging activities benefits memory as well. Try your hand at physical puzzles, Sudoku and crosswords; learn new skills, hobbies or languages; and challenge yourself with brain games such as Luminosity.

Complex thinking: Jobs or activities that involve complex, detailed work carry a lower risk of memory loss than those that are less intellectually demanding.

Positivity: Starting your day with a mental accounting of things to be grateful for contributes to brain health and performance. Reframing events with positive thinking increases adaptability and resilience as well.

Tranquillity: Silence digital distractions in favour of a good book, meditation, journaling or some other relaxing activity to help focus your mind and improve concentration.

Sources: Better Sleep Council study; Neurology, Aug. 25, 2020; Janus BrainWorks