Self-care for your brain

Your brain needs care just like any other part of the body. As you age, your brain naturally shrinks, and certain hormones and neurotransmitters decline. It's not uncommon for people to notice changes in their memory, thinking, and other cognitive abilities.

Healthy lifestyle choices can reduce cognitive decline. When you care for your brain, you protect your ability to focus, remember, and learn new things.

YOUR BRAIN NEEDS

A healthy brain relies on a healthy lifestyle:

- Quality nutrients that support brain cells

- Omega 3 fats from fatty fish, nuts, seeds, and plant oils such as flaxseed

- Vitamins D, E, K, and B vitamins from a variety of fruits, vegetables, and sunshine (Vitamin D)

- Minerals such as iron, copper, and magnesium from leafy greens and other plant foods

- 7-9 hours of good quality sleep each night

- Regular exercise and movement to promote blood flow and protect blood pressure

- Time to relax and de-stress

- Regular mental stimulation and challenge

BRAIN DRAINERS

Some unhealthy choices or physical conditions can worsen mental decline over time. Anything that negatively impacts the health of the body affects the health of the brain, such as:

- Smoking and other tobacco and nicotine products, such as chewing tobacco

- Excessive alcohol intake

- High blood pressure

- Being overweight or obese

- Lack of physical activity

- Poor diet, especially processed foods and lots of red meat

- Social isolation and loneliness

BRAIN SELF-CARE

Eating a healthy diet that focuses on plants, getting enough physical activity, and sleeping well is good for every part of your body. But, your brain also benefits from self-care to meet its unique needs. Here are some ideas:

- Meditate to promote calming brain waves

- Learn an instrument to introduce a new skill

- Read daily to expand your knowledge

- Do a crossword or other type of puzzle to challenge your brain

- Pick up a new hobby

- Explore a new place

- Volunteer for a cause you believe in

- Be social and meet new people