

MOVE TO BE STRONG!



VON SMART NEWSLETTER



MARCH 2023

Your brain is the most complex part of the human body. It is the seat of intelligence, interpreter of the senses, initiator of body movement, controller of behavior. It goes without saying, brain health is of utmost importance to aging well.

March is Brain Health Awareness Month. Our brain is known for being our “control center” of posture and walking. Disorders that affect the brain like strokes, brain tumors, or movement disorders such as Parkinson’s disease related conditions, can affect your ability to stand and walk normally, leading to an increased risk for falls.

When we exercise we practice coordination, balance and muscular cueing. While you are focusing on completing the movements you are exercising your brain. Physical activity can improve your overall cognitive health by helping you think, react, learn and problem-solve. It can also help to reduce anxiety and depression.

Exercise is not the only way to keep our brain healthy. Eating nutritious foods, practicing mind games like sudoku, crosswords and word searches, and continuing to learn new skills and try new things are great ways to keep your brain healthy.

The VON SMART Program

Helping to keep our community dwelling older adults active, engaged and free from falls!

For more information about SMART exercise classes and fall prevention workshops please contact:

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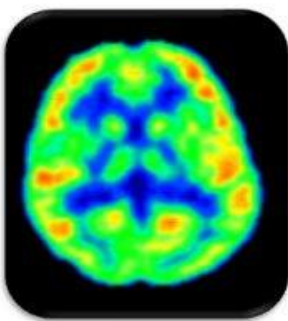




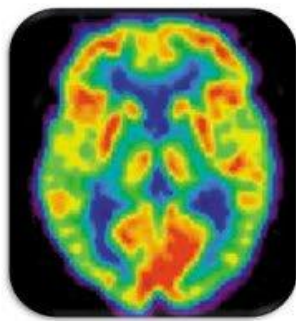
Researchers have found that music may decrease your risk for falls. It has been shown that the rhythm of the music combined with exercise can improve measures of gait and stability.

Listening to music can also reduce anxiety, blood pressure, pain and improves sleep, mental alertness, and memory.

The brain at rest



The brain's reaction to music

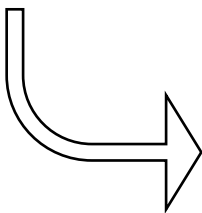


Music can have a powerful effect on the brain. The image to the left is an MRI of the brain at rest and the brain's reaction to music. Every activity, experience, and piece of information you come across in your life changes your brain.

March is National Nutrition Month



12 FOODS TO PROMOTE BRAIN HEALTH



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1. Coconut oil
- 

2. Wild oily fish
- 

3. Green vegetables
- 

4. Avocados
- 

5. Bone Broth
- 

6. Broccoli
- 

7. Pure Chocolate, 100%
- 

8. Beets
- 

9. Celery
- 

10. Fermented Foods
- 

11. Nuts
- 

12. Berries

Did You Know?

Most people exercise primarily to help prevent serious conditions like diabetes, obesity and heart disease. Only few people exercise with the intent to improve their brain function. At this point we know that the brain is the master control system of our body. But did you know that the brain can benefit from exercise too?

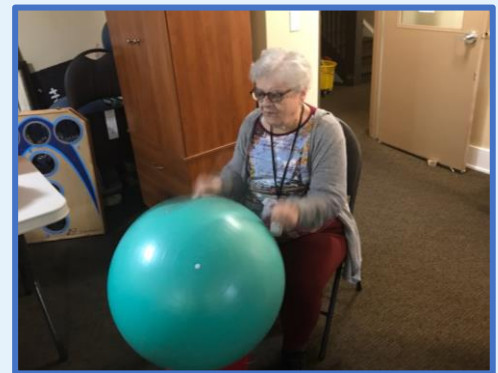
The following are 10 Neurological benefits of exercise:

1. Decreased stress by promoting the production of serotonin and norepinephrine
2. Decreased social anxiety by increasing oxygen saturation and angiogenesis (the growth of new blood vessels) in the brain
3. Improved processing of emotions improving mental health by improving self-esteem and cognitive function
4. Promotes neurogenesis (the generation of new neurons), neuroplasticity and neurochemistry
5. Euphoria (short-term) by increasing the production of our feel-good hormones
6. Increased energy, focus and attention by boosting the brain's dopamine, norepinephrine and serotonin which are associated with energy, focus and attention
7. Hinderance to the aging process by reducing age-related declines in VO2max, mean blood pressure, systematic vascular resistance, increases muscle strength, and independence
8. Improved memory by increasing molecular targets like brain-derived neurotrophic factors (BDNF), which increases synaptogenesis and forming new synapses that mediate learning and memory
9. Improved blood circulation by expanding the network of capillaries
10. Decreased 'brain fog' through the release of adrenalin associated with aerobic exercises.

VON SMART Fitness Friends!



Giovannina 100 years of age, has found that the SMART/DROM (drumming & fitness) classes have strengthened her arms, increased her alertness, have helped her become livelier. She has overcome a language barrier by following the classes using visual cues, she also shared that her hand eye coordination is not the best. There are a few things that keep her motivated to come to class which is the walk to class, the camaraderie, great exercises, good song selection, knowing that the classes help to improve her other senses, and mental health. Keep up the good work Giovannina!



Diana who has impaired sight, also attends SMART classes. She shared that her strength has improved, her physical and musical coordination have improved and her hearing has become more attuned. Prior to class Diana had difficulty with the physical coordination of drumming the ball and attuning herself to the different areas of the ball, however this was overcome with instructional cuing. Diana always looks forward to coming to class but what keeps her motivated is being part of a group of like-minded people, the fun and laughter, and the great music. She loves the concert feel of the class, the collaboration in choosing songs, and knowing that something so fun has great benefits to her health as well. Great job Diana!

Resources McMaster Optimal Aging Portal

Strategies to help battle loneliness and social isolation in our golden years

[\(\[mcmasteroptimalaging.org\]\(http://mcmasteroptimalaging.org\)\)](http://mcmasteroptimalaging.org)



Loneliness and social isolation do not discriminate. They can impact anyone at any age and for a variety of reasons. That said, older adults tend to be especially susceptible targets. Disability and poor health, decreased mobility and access to transportation, losing loved ones, retirement, changes to housing, reduced income, and pandemics are just a few factors that put older adults at an increased risk of experiencing loneliness and social isolation.

What the research tells us

Overall, the review found eight strategies that can be effective in improving one or more of the following: loneliness, social isolation, and social support. These strategies are animal therapy, cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) or psychotherapy, social therapy, exercise, music therapy, reminiscence therapy, or some combination of strategies. Folks engaging in these strategies were compared to those not participating in any strategy or partaking in a different kind of strategy.

What did these strategies entail? Animal therapy had older adults interact with either live or robotic animals—generally, dogs or birds. CBT centred on the learning of coping skills. Social therapy included participation in a friendly visitor program. Exercise involved engaging in different exercises like Tai Chi or group yoga. Music therapy consisted of choir programs and rhythm wellness programs. Reminiscence therapy provoked memories by leveraging senses like sight, touch, and smell. Strategies using technology integrated items like smartphones, computers, and pedometers. Lastly, some interventions combined two or more strategies.

The evidence shows that these strategies are effective, but their effect varies by approach and setting. Let's take a closer look at the findings.

First, we have older adults living in the community. In this population, the review found that exercise and music therapy can reduce loneliness by a small amount, while reminiscence therapy and combined or multi-component strategies can do so by a moderate amount. Additionally, CBT or psychotherapy and combined or multi-component strategies can increase social support by a small amount, while social therapy can do so by a large amount.

Second, we have older adults living in long-term care settings. In this population, the review found that exercise and combined or multi-component strategies can reduce loneliness by a moderate amount, whereas animal therapy and reminiscence therapy can do so by a large amount. Furthermore, strategies that use technology were shown to reduce social isolation by a large amount.

Ultimately, humans are social beings, we need one another to age optimally. If you feel lonely or socially isolated, supports are available that may reduce your loneliness and/or isolation. Connecting with your health care team is a good first step to discuss potential strategies that may work best for you.

VON Updates

Happy St Patricks Day from the VON SMART Team!



VON SMART Exercise & Fall Prevention

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