



# Mindful Aging: Practical Tips for a Healthy Brain

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# Learning Objectives

By the end of this talk, you will be able to:

- Understand the signs of normal cognitive aging
- Incorporate key elements of a healthy exercise routine
- Choose foods that can help delay cognitive decline
- Make changes to your routine to help you get better sleep
- Recognize why treatment of hearing loss and mood are helpful for your cognition
- Avoid medications that put you at higher risk

# Normal cognitive aging

- Cognitive decline is a part of normal aging
- Begins in our 40s!
- Mildly slowed speed-of-processing
- Difficulty with “multi-tasking”
- Name-face recognition impairment
- Slowed retrieval of old information, and retrieval errors (e.g. actors names)
- A tendency to ramble





# Cognitive Reserve



The pace and degree of this cognitive decline can vary



Many possible factors can affect it



But how can we slow it down?



# Exercise



Move more throughout the day and sit less



At least 150 to 300 minutes weekly (spaced throughout the week) of at least moderate-intensity aerobic exercise



At least 2 days weekly of muscle-strengthening exercises



Also add in flexibility and balance!

# Exercise – common missteps



Not talking to your doctor  
before starting a new routine



Doing too much too soon



Not having a balanced  
routine



A top-down view of a variety of fresh, healthy ingredients arranged on a dark surface. The items include: sliced lemons in a white bowl, almonds in a white bowl, red grapes in a white bowl, blueberries in a white bowl, sliced kiwi in a white bowl, a halved avocado, several red and orange bell peppers, cherry tomatoes, green beans, celery stalks, garlic cloves, a head of ginger, and various grains like quinoa and lentils in white bowls. The background is a soft, light-colored gradient.

# The MIND Diet

- The Mediterranean-DASH Diet Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay
- Followed older adults for 10 years
- Those who followed the MIND diet had slower rates of cognitive decline





## The MIND Diet

- Highlights plant-based foods and limits the intake of animal and high saturated fat foods
- Recommends specific “brain healthy” foods to include, and five unhealthy food items to limit





## The MIND Diet – The Dos

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3+ servings a day of whole grains

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1+ servings a day of vegetables (other than green leafy)

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6+ servings a week of green leafy vegetables

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5+ servings a week of nuts

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4+ meals a week of beans

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2+ servings a week of berries

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2+ meals a week of poultry

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1+ meals a week of fish

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Mainly olive oil if added fat is used



## The MIND Diet – The Don'ts

- Fewer than 5 servings a week of pastries and sweets
- Fewer than 4 servings a week of red meat (including beef, pork, lamb, and products made from these meats)
- Less than one serving a week of cheese and fried foods
- Less than 1 tablespoon a day of butter/stick margarine

# Hearing and cognitive decline



How does hearing loss contribute to cognitive decline?



Get your hearing tested regularly



Can take time to adjust to hearing aids!

# Medical Conditions and Medications

- Keep conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart failure under good control
- Only take medications prescribed and recommended by your doctor
- Be careful of some over the counter medications! *For example, diphenhydramine (Benadryl) can have significant effects on your cognition*







# Sleep

- Be aware of symptoms of sleep apnea
- Avoid sleep medications as much as possible
- Stick to the same sleep schedule
- Exercise can be helpful for sleep
- Avoid eating and drinking for three hours before bed
- No caffeine after the morning



# Mood

- Depression and anxiety affect attention
- Attention is key for cognitive processing!





# Alcohol

- Heavy drinking (>3 drinks per day) is associated with increased risk of cognitive decline
- Mixed evidence for mild to moderate drinking
- *However, alcohol definitely increases fall risk*

