

Brain Health Self-Management Plan

Promote a healthy brain! Diet, nutrition, physical health, mental health, and social well-being are all key lifestyle factors in promoting a healthy brain.

- Switch from saturated and trans fats to olive oil and fatty fish, such as salmon or ocean trout.
- Get a good night's sleep.
- If you smoke, consider quitting.
- Avoid drinking alcohol.
- Get your hearing checked.
- Get and obtain healthy physical activity.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar under control.
- Consider learning new information and skills.

Green Flags—All Clear



If you:

- Eat a balanced and healthy diet.
- Get at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity.
- Have mental stimulation, like reading, or doing crossword puzzles, or memory exercises.
- Stay socially active with friends and family.

What this means ...

- Good work!
- You are taking steps towards your brain health.

Keep up the great work!

Yellow Flags—Caution



If you:

- Are not following a healthy diet or getting regular exercise.
- Do not get regular sleep, or if your sleep is often interrupted.
- Drink alcohol in excess.
- Smoke cigarettes or chew tobacco.
- Have diabetes and your blood sugar is not well controlled.
- Forget important events or familiar locations, have difficulty concentrating, misplace things, have a difficult time making decisions, or have changes in mood or personality.

What this means ...

- You are at higher risk for brain related changes, including problems with memory, mood, and behavior.
- Higher blood sugar affects brain health.
- You are at higher risk for cancer.
- You may have memory loss that needs evaluating by your health care provider.
- Risk factors for stroke are also risk factors for dementia.

Call your health care provider if symptoms do not improve.

Name:

Number:

Instructions:

If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.

Red Flags—Stop and Think



If you or a loved one have:

- Trouble thinking clearly.
- Facial drooping or facial numbness.
- Arm weakness.
- Speech difficulty, or speech slurring.
- Sudden trouble seeing (one or both eyes).
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance, or coordination.
- Sudden onset of severe headache with no known cause.
- Unresponsiveness.
- Seizures.

What this means ...

- A possible stroke. You need to be evaluated by a health care professional immediately.

If possible, notify your health care provider's office.

Name:

Number:

Follow these instructions: **CALL 9-1-1**

If you notice a Red Flag, CALL 9-1-1. Emergency!

Brain Health Fast Facts

- Every time your heart beats, your arteries carry 20%–25% of your blood to the brain.
- Your brain uses 20% of the total oxygen in your body.
- There are 100,000 miles of blood vessels in the brain. High blood pressure weakens the blood vessels over time, leading to a stroke or aneurysm.
- Every time you recall a memory or have a new thought, you create a connection in the brain.
- Size doesn't matter in the brain. There is no evidence that a larger brain is smarter than a smaller brain.
- Excessive stress has been shown to alter brain functioning.

What can you do?

- Keep your blood pressure under control.
 - If you have difficulty hearing, get your hearing checked.
 - Consider mind-challenging activities, like puzzles or memory games. (According to a study published in The New England Journal of Medicine, adults who take part in mind-challenging activities were 63% less likely to develop dementia.)
 - Get regular physical activity since it's important for a healthy body and a healthy brain. Exercise promotes effective blood circulation to the brain.
 - Get plenty of sleep. A minimum of seven hours of uninterrupted sleep is best. Avoid watching TV or working on the computer before bedtime.
 - Consider decreasing the amount of caffeine you take in daily, particularly if you consume a lot of caffeine through coffee and cola beverages.
- Caffeine can make a person feel restless and leads to anxiety and insomnia.
- Manage your stress. Consider meditation or other methods to calm down and relax.
 - Drink plenty of water, unless otherwise directed by your medical provider.
 - Eliminate bad habits. Drinking, smoking, inactivity, poor diet, worry, and anger are not helpful in promoting brain health.
 - Whether you work or are retired, it's important to maintain a sense of purpose. Whether you have a hobby, you volunteer, read, write stories, or have other tasks you're involved with, it's important to find something worthwhile to do.

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Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County—plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County. For information about services or interpretation assistance, call 844-348-5464 or e-mail

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