



Key to Good Health is All in Your Head

Is the key to good health all in your head? It might be. Although exercise routines tend to focus on improving areas below the neck, studies have shown that activities we do to shrink our waistlines can be influential -- or even detrimental -- to the health and functioning of the brain.

“We all know by now that overeating and bad habits like smoking and not exercising can make us look and feel bad,” says David Perlmutter, MD, FACN, a neurologist and author of *The Better Brain Book*. “What people may not realize is that other activities perceived as healthy may in fact harm the brain as well as the body.”

Dr. Perlmutter suggests these four tips for achieving better physical and cerebral health.

1. USE YOUR HEAD WHILE BROWSING THE SUPERMARKET.

Fruits and vegetables are good sources of antioxidants, which help the body neutralize harmful free radicals and enhance the process by which the brain makes its energy. The more color in the fruits and vegetables, the more antioxidants.



2. BE MINDFUL OF TOXINS FOUND IN HEALTHY FOODS.

Fruits, vegetables and fish are commonly considered healthy foods. However, according to U.S. government data, strawberries, peaches, apples, sweet bell peppers and imported grapes were among the produce found to have the highest levels of residue from pesticides. Those who are routinely exposed to pesticides have a dramatically higher risk of Parkinson's disease. Look for organic fruits and vegetables whenever possible. And be sure to wash all fresh foods before eating. Certain fish also may be extremely high in mercury, a known brain toxin. Both the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency advise pregnant and nursing women, as well as children, to limit their fish consumption.

3. WATER YOUR BRAIN

If you're feeling sluggish, this may be a sign that your brain needs water. Drink at least eight glasses of water a day as adequate hydration is critical for optimal brain function. To reduce consumption of chlorine, pesticides and heavy metals, drink bottled water (spring or distilled) or tap water purified by reverse osmosis.

4. GET MENTAL AND PHYSICAL EXERCISE.

Physical exercise oxygenates the blood, maintains good blood flow to the brain, and actually encourages the formation of new brain cells! For the most benefit, find an exercise or some physical activity that you enjoy, and challenge your mind by varying your program. Bicycle one day. Walk the dog the next. Try new activities like wall climbing or fencing. But regardless of what activity you choose, always use appropriate head protection.

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