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Marion County Health Bulletin

The Mission of the Marion County Health Department is to improve the quality of life through preventing disease and preventative health maintenance.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Making the Most of Our Gray Matter How to Maximize Your Brain's Potential

Author Dawn Pick Benson states, "When we consider this incredible gift called the brain and the abilities God has given us through it, it just makes sense to take care of it". Here are a few ideas she suggest to maximize your brain's potential.

Move It or Lose It

Aerobic exercise boosts brain power and can lower a person's chance of getting Alzheimer's by more than 60 percent. "Alifetimeof exercise can result in a sometimes astonishing elevation in cogitive performance, compared with those who are sedentary," says John Medina, author of *Brain Rules*. In additions, the increased blood, glucose, and oxygen flow that reaches your brain during exercise also helps produce the relaxed,"clearing of the mind" feeling that often accompanies taking a walk.

Food For Thought

If you have ever hit an afternoon lull after a huge lunch with dessert, you understand that the foods we eat can affect our brain function. The brain utilizes 20 percent of the body carbohydrates. "Your body and your brain will perform much better if you eat carbohydrates that have a low glycemic index and raise your blood sugar slowly and steadily," explain Simon Evans and Paul Burghardt in their book *Brain-Fit*

for Life. Complex carbohydrates found in certain fruits, vegetables, and whole grains are much more "brain friendly" than the simple carbs found in candy, icing, syrups, packaged baked goods, and table sugar. Among the worst offenders are high-fructose corn syrup,, sugary drinks like cola and fruit juices.

Take a Load Off

When your body is stressed to the max, it produces a stress hormone called cortisol. According to www.youramazingbrain.org, "Raised levels of cortisol for porlonged periods can damp down you immune system and decrease the number of brain cells, impairing your memory." So building regular periods of downtime into your schedule is just what the doctor ordered and what your brain needs.

Sleep on It

Simply getting the right amount of shuteye each night can make a world of difference for your brain. According to brainready.com, a well-rested person will always perform mental tasks better than a sleep-deprived person. For most, this means seven to nine hours of sleep.

To read more on *how to maximize your brain's potential*, see the October 2009 issue of *CS Christian Single*, "Mind over Matter" by Dawn Pick Benson.



www.
goredforwomen
.org

In the whirl of errands and family obligations, not to mention holding down a job, it is easy to get out of touch with our feelings, our perception of ourselves and miss even obvious signs that our hearts may be at risk. Now is the time to take heart in the movement.

Did you know...

- 1 in 3 women has some form of heart and blood vessel disease
- Cardiovascular disease kills about 460,000 women per year—nearly twice as many women as all forms of cancer
- While 1 in 30 women's deaths is from breast cancer, 1 in 3 women's deaths is from cardiovascular disease
- 1 in 3 women don't know heart disease is their greatest health risk