

# SHARPEN UP!

## KEEPING YOUR BRAIN FIT AS YOU AGE

Have you ever walked into a room, just to find yourself trying to remember what you needed? Or have you left the grocery store with three things, but forgot the one item that you meant to purchase?

You might think you are on the brink of age-related memory loss, like Alzheimer's or dementia. However, according to The Centers for Disease Control and prevention, Alzheimer's and dementia "are not an inevitable part of aging...[and] up to 40% of dementia cases may be prevented".

The good news is that there are many ways to stay sharp as you age. Julia VanTine, the Author of *Ageless Brain*, offers the following tips:

1. **Challenge yourself to learn new things!** Get out of your comfort zone and take on something new. Dr. Eva Selhub states that the ability of the brain to change over a person's lifetime can be maintained and improved by learning new things. For example, take a different route to work, take an art class, take up chess, learn a new language, or take a technology class. There are many creative outlets that can be explored in-person and online.
2. **Retire to something, not from something. Although retirement might seem like a relaxing paradise, it can be hard on your brain since** work consistently challenges our minds. Ask yourself how you want to spend your time, what activities do you really like to do, and what will motivate you, and then follow through with your ideas.
3. **Stay connected to others.** Getting connected with others provides a workout for your brain. Call a friend, mentor a youth, or FaceTime a family member. If technology is a barrier, you can join a local phone program, such as [Keep in Touch](#), which pairs a verified volunteer with a senior to help widen their social circle, share stories, and make a friend.
4. **Exercise and sleep.** Walking, swimming, pickleball, tai chi, you name it – exercising 2-3 times a week improves learning and memory. Exercise also stimulates new neuron growth and protects existing ones. Don't feel rested? Consider taking naps. Getting enough sleep can help with memory, thinking clearly, and communication.

As you age, your brain may take longer to process things, but routine memory, and knowledge should remain stable and may actually improve over time. It is normal to forget things occasionally,

If you would like to know about programs available to you through FCSS, contact Renee White at (587) 370-8518 or [renee.white@fcss.ca](mailto:renee.white@fcss.ca).

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