

# Your Amazing Brain

## Brain Health: How You Can Make A Difference

(NAPSA)—If you're like most people, you've noticed differences in the way your mind works over time. The good news is that understanding the potential threats to brain health can help you make smart choices to strengthen mental alertness.

### Threats to Brain Health

Some health conditions can negatively affect your brain. Heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes can alter or damage blood vessels throughout your body, including the brain.

Some medications and combinations of drugs, as well as alcohol use, may affect thinking.

Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia harm the brain, too. While no one knows how to prevent dementia, many approaches that are good for your health in other ways, like exercise and a healthy diet, are being tested.

### Actions That Help Your Brain

- **Get regular health screenings.**

- **Manage** diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

- **Talk with your doctor** or pharmacist about the medications you take and any possible side effects.

- **Try to maintain a balanced diet** of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats (including fish and poultry), and low-fat or nonfat dairy products. Monitor your intake of solid fat, sugar and salt and eat proper portion sizes.

- **Drink moderately, if at all, because avoiding alcohol** can reverse some negative changes related to brain health.

- **Be physically active** because doing so may improve connections among your brain cells. Older



**If you put your mind to it, you can make smart choices that will support brain health as you age.**

adults should get at least 150 minutes of exercise each week.

- **Don't smoke.** Quitting at any age will be beneficial to your mind and body. Nonsmokers have a lower risk of heart attacks, stroke and lung diseases, as well as increased blood circulation.

- **Be safe.** Older adults are at higher risk of falling and other accidents that can cause brain injury. To reduce your risk, exercise to improve balance and coordination, take a falls prevention class and make your home safer.

- **Keep your mind active** by doing mentally stimulating activities including reading, playing games, teaching or taking a class, and being social. Volunteer.

- **Visit** an Area Agency on Aging (AAA). These community-based agencies provide a welcoming environment for older adults and caregivers interested in learning about services from meals, transportation and in-home care to volunteer opportunities and classes to keep them healthy and engaged.

### Free Brochure

For more information and a free brochure containing strategies to promote brain health, call the Eldercare Locator at 800-677-1116 or visit [www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov).