

AGING

facts & fancies

Keeping Your Mind Fit With Mental Exercise

by Dr. Ryuta Kawashima

(NAPSA)—Go figure. Performing math problems regularly may help alleviate some of the symptoms of dementia.

The idea is that just as regular exercise is known to help slow the deterioration of muscles, the same is true for the brain.

In order to maintain your physical health, you have to exercise regularly, eat healthily and sleep well. In like manner, in order to maintain your mental health, you need to exercise your brain regularly, eat healthily and sleep well. You have to exercise your brain just as you would any other part of your body if you were trying to stay fit.

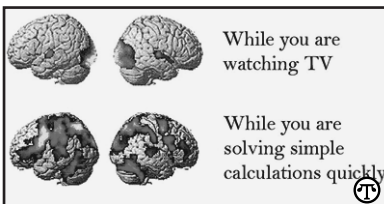
Research conducted in Japan has led me to believe that doing simple math calculations quickly and reading out loud can benefit adults who wish to work on the following:

- creativity
- memory skills
- communication skills
- slowing the mental effects of aging.

These exercises also have benefits for adults with the following symptoms:

- increasing forgetfulness
- difficulty remembering people's names, spelling words and expressing thoughts.

Based on this research, my lab created a program to help Japan's aging population maintain optimal brain functioning as



Research indicates that performing simple calculations quickly may help alleviate symptoms of dementia by activating large regions of the brain.

it grows older.

The brain health exercises in this program help increase the delivery of oxygen, blood and various amino acids to large regions of the brain.

The benefits seem to come from activating the largest sections of the prefrontal cortex. The result is more neurons and neural connections, which are characteristic of a healthy brain.

Dr. Ryuta Kawashima has spent 15 years researching the brain. A prominent neurologist in Japan, Kawashima's dream is to make brain maintenance a public priority.

He developed the "Train Your Brain" program to help Japan's aging population. His book, "Train Your Brain: 60 Days to a Better Brain" (Kumon Publishing North America, Inc.; \$12.95), is based on that program.

The book is available both online and in bookstores.