

# THE GUIDED LIGHT

LA CROSSE COUNTY'S DEMENTIA NEWSLETTER  
FOR HOPE, SUPPORT, AND RESOURCES

## "Brain Healthy Lifestyle"



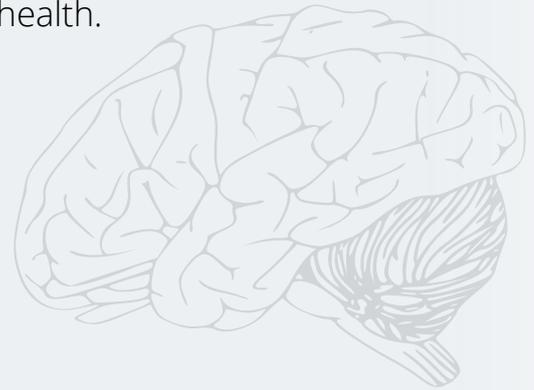
Brain health is a critical piece of your overall health. It underlies your ability to communicate, make decisions, problem-solve and live a productive and useful life. Because the brain controls so much of daily function, it is arguably the single most valuable organ in the human body. Brain health is important across the lifespan and even after dementia is diagnosed. Read more about the components of a brain healthy lifestyle, tips and resources for incorporating into your routine and how to continue focusing on brain health with a dementia diagnosis.

### Why Does Brain Health Matter?

The brain is a complex and fascinating organ that should be taken care of from the time in utero to the life you live today and beyond. Unfortunately, there are a lot of conditions that can impact brain health.

These diseases and disorders include:

- Vascular diseases
- Degenerative diseases (Dementias)
- Brain tissue injuries (TBIs)
- Inflammation
- Malnutrition and vitamin deficiencies
- Immune-mediated diseases
- Mental Health



Brain healthy lifestyles, protecting the brain and routine medical check-ups can preserve and maintain your brain function!

### Lifestyle Recommendations to Maximize your Brain Health



Nutrition, exercise, sleep, leisure activities, and stress all impact brain health. The healthier a person is physically, the more likely they'll stay cognitively healthy. There is no guarantee a healthy lifestyle will eliminate the risk of dementia; however, the research is strong to support a brain healthy lifestyle does impact and improve the odds of our long-term cognitive health. The next pages contain key components and tips to get started!

## Cognitive Activity

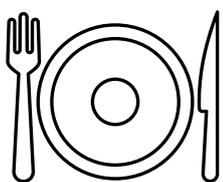


This is about doing things that keep your mind sharp, like learning something new and challenging yourself. You might find reading books or watching movies on topics of interest fuel your mind. Do you have activities that mentally stimulate you?

### TRY IT OUT!

- Be a lifelong learner; take a class or learn something new.
- Take a different route than you normally do
- Try Crosswords or Sudoku (or up the challenge level)
- Rearrange your kitchen or dresser drawers, it'll take some brain power to get a new routine with the change

## Nutrition



There is a link between diet and brain processes. Specific nutrients in food - omega-3 fatty acids, flavonoids, vitamins B, D and E, and choline - have been associated with improved cognitive function in older people. Diet can affect the way our brain cells communicate.

### TRY IT OUT!

- Follow Mediterranean diet (MIND Diet) recommendations
- Try swapping out recipes and snacks with MIND Diet foods
- Reduce processed foods and saturated fats
- Increase fresh fruits and vegetables

## Cope with Emotions, Sleep & Relaxation



Do you have activities that help you acknowledge, process and express your feelings and that recharge you? Similarly, we must nurture our spirit and eliminate stress, which is toxic to our brains. These activities help you develop a deeper sense of meaning, understanding, or connection outside oneself as well as press 'pause' to the constant day-to-day demands.

### TRY IT OUT!

- Try meditation, attending religious services, praying or being in nature
- Incorporate deep breathing exercises
- Setting boundaries and saying NO to things that drain you

Disrupted sleep can cause mood changes, poor concentration, and limited productivity. These effects build over time and can cause chronic conditions. During waking hours, the brain is very active and uses a lot of energy. During sleep, the brain slows down allowing itself to restore energy and supplies to the cells while removing waste and toxins that built up during the day. These are essential processes that occur for memory and performance.

### TRY IT OUT!

- Limit napping to 20 minutes a day
- Encourage daytime light exposure
- Avoid large meals, alcohol, caffeine & nicotine close to bedtime

## Social Engagement



Close connections are important to your well-being and can improve memory and thinking abilities. There isn't a certain number of hours recommended and you don't have to have a large social network. The key is to figure out your optimal social needs and build time in your schedule. Consider: Are you getting enough face-to-face time with your friends? What are you doing to nurture your relationships with friends and family? Are relationships from others filling your cup?

### TRY IT OUT!

- Call a friend or family member regularly
- Attend community classes to build social networks
- Forgo delivery or pick up services, get out of your house and into the stores!

## Physical Activity



Exercise contributes to healthy blood flow ensuring the brain gets the nutrients and oxygen it needs. High blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, stroke, obesity are all associated with vascular health, and all are risks factors for cognitive decline. Brain cells need steady blood flow to stay alive, interruptions to this cause significant cell death and brain damage. Even a little physical activity can have real benefits for the brain. Incorporating 30 minutes of activity 5 days a week that raises your heart rate and causes you to breath faster is highly recommended.

### TRY IT OUT!

- Movement-Based Leisure activities are a great way to moving! Bowling, Gardening, Yoga, Dance, Golf, Biking!
- If already physically active, add a brain boost by increasing the frequency of exercise, the intensity, length of time and and cross training by trying out different types

## Brain Health for People Living with Dementia?



### *A message to caregivers...*

As you look to incorporate brain healthy activities for your loved one to improve their overall health and for symptom management, **REMEMBER YOUR OWN BRAIN HEALTH IS ESSENTIAL** for maintaining your health and will aid in strengthening your ability to provide quality care to your loved one. Start out small and build upon the progress you make!

Our day-to-day activities define us, enhance our self-esteem and give purpose to our lives. This doesn't go away when someone is diagnosed with dementia, in fact, it's even more important! When we discuss the importance of brain health and all it does for us, it's important to note, those same benefits are possible for people living with dementia. Through daily living and leisure activities, people with dementia can maintain structure and retain skills, be provided opportunities for social interaction, improve and manage behavioral and psychological symptoms and benefit their overall mental and emotional well-being. Try to find activities that match the person's abilities and interests, but remember, activity doesn't have to be recreation/fun. Engagement in day-to-day life skills is equally fulfilling for people with dementia.



## UPCOMING CLASSES & EVENTS

April - May - June 2024

- Getting to Know Dementia - Education for Caregivers **Mondays 12:30-2pm April 1-May 6** (6 sessions) La Crosse Dahl YMCA. Learn about brain-related changes, understand Teepa Snow model of progression of dementia, and approaches for positive relationships. Register 608-785-5700
- Dementia Live - **April 5** at Gundersen Health System, Register by calling 608-785-5700 or online <https://tinyurl.com/y547njkp>
- Powerful Tools for Caregivers **April 10-May15, Wed. 1-2:30pm** at Holmen Community Center, Register 608-785-5700
- Memory Camp - Outdoor experiences, lunch and socialization. **Wed. May1-June5, 10:30am-1:30pm.** The Nature Place. Register: Call 608-780-0471
- Learn & Connect - Cognitive & Memory Loss Education for new diagnosis, early-stage caregiving. **Wednesdays May 1-22 10:30am-Noon** at GHS East Building, 3rd Floor Neuro. Register: 608-785-5700
- Parkinson's Walk- Music, Resources, Crafts **Sat. May 4, 10am-2pm.** Myrick Park Shelter
- Building Awareness-Relevant Aging Sessions **Tues. May 14, 10:30am-2:30pm** Black River Beach, Free, includes lunch. Register 608-785-5700
- Aging Strong GHS Conference **May 17, 9a-1p** Radisson La Crosse. \$30. Register 775-4717
- Levity on a Sunday - **May 19, 11am-2pm** The Hatchery -Riverside Park. Tickets \$25. Games, raffles, food. Fundraising benefit for OASIS

**FOR MORE local ongoing dementia friendly resources, social activities, caregiver support groups  
Call ADRC 608-785-5700**

### June is Brain Health & Dementia Awareness Month!

*To inform and unite individuals, organizations and the community with brain health opportunities, awareness of dementia and the variety of supports and resources available in La Crosse County.  
We invite the public to attend!*

#### Event Highlights:

- Experience Dementia Simulation
- Friday Brain Enrichment Activities
- #EndAlzFest Fundraiser at The Courtyard at Celebrations on the River
- Free Brain Checks!
- Spark Robin Williams battle with Lewy Body Dementia Documentary
- The most common form of dementia affecting those under 60: It's Not Alzheimer's

#### All Month:

- BrainFit Bingo - complete brain healthy activities, turn in blackouts for raffle!

#### There's More! For Full Schedule of Events:

- Call the Aging & Disability Resource Center of La Crosse Co. 608-785-5700
- Find on Facebook "Dementia Friendly Community La-Crosse County Dementia Coalition"



Sign up for a copy of this newsletter: 608-785-5700