WHY?
People who exercise regularly have a lower risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease.

HOW IT HELPS:
• Improves blood flow and memory
• Stimulates chemical changes that enhance learning, mood and thinking
• Reduces stress
• Improves sleep quality

WHY?
Mental activity is just as critical as physical exercise in keeping your brain fit and healthy.

HOW IT HELPS:
• Improves brain functioning
• Promotes new brain cell growth
• Decreases likelihood of developing dementia

WHY?
You are what you eat. Foods rich in antioxidants can help fend off the harmful effects of oxidation from lifestyle and environmental factors that damage your brain as it ages.

HOW IT HELPS:
• Improves blood flow to the brain
• Reduces inflammation
• Preserves memory
• Reduces the risk of Alzheimer’s disease
• Protects against the formation of damaging plaques in the brain

WHY?
Staying connected with family and friends is important for brain health. Studies show those with the most interaction within their community experience the slowest rate of memory decline.

HOW IT HELPS:
• Provides support
• Reduces stress
• Combats depression
• Enhances intellectual stimulation

WHY?
Getting a good night’s sleep (6 hours or more is recommended) and managing stress are habits that could help you keep your brain young and nimble well into your golden years. Sleep disturbance should be investigated by your doctor.

HOW IT HELPS:
• Energizes you
• Improves your mood
• Boosts immune system
• May reduce buildup of an abnormal protein called beta-amyloid plaque, associated with Alzheimer’s disease

WHY?
Many common medical conditions are linked to declining brain function.

HOW IT HELPS:
• Hypertension can cause structural damage in the brain that leads to mental decline
• Being overweight makes you prone to developing diabetes, which increases your risk of getting dementia
• High cholesterol increases your risk of developing dementia
• Moderate to severe head injuries increase your risk of dementia or Alzheimer’s disease
• Depression is associated with increased risk of Alzheimer’s disease
• Heavy smokers have 2x the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease than nonsmokers

Get 4 kinds of exercise for brain health: Aerobic, strength, flexibility and balance exercises (3-5 sessions a week).

Use it or lose it. Find something you love, whether traditional or online games, a new hobby or skill, or taking a class. Novel activities help your brain form new cellular connections and strengthen existing ones.

Cook and eat real food. Choose foods abundant in the Mediterranean diet — fruits and vegetables, fish (or walnuts, flaxseeds and soybeans), eggs (in moderation), whole grains, dark chocolate, spices, coffee or tea and red wine (in moderation).

Stay connected. Cherish the family and friends you already have by spending time with them, but also look to begin new relationships with like-minded people. Try volunteering or joining a club.

Exercise, get sunlight and maintain a healthy weight. Keep your bedroom dark, don’t use electronics at bedtime and develop a relaxing bedtime ritual. Remember: You’ll always have stress. It’s how you reduce and manage it that makes a difference.

Keep it in check. Maintain a healthy blood pressure and weight, take medication as prescribed, cut down on salt and sugar, keep active and stay socially connected and positive. Seek out help if you are depressed.

Sources:
nia.nih.gov/alzheimers
clevelandclinic.org/HealthHub