

# Healthy LIVING while aging!



June 2022

Healthy aging newsletter provided by UNR Extension

Volume 3, Issue 6

## How Can We Improve Brain Health?

By Sarah Lenz Lock, Juris Doctor

Science teaches us that people's habits and lifestyles can affect their brain health for better or worse. Yet even when we know that healthy behaviors can reduce our risks for cognitive decline, we still cling to habits and behaviors that increase our risks as we age. But it does not have to be this way.

That is why I'm so excited about a new report from the Global Council on Brain Health: "How to sustain brain health behaviors: applying lessons of public health and science to drive change." The report outlines key strategies to help us live brain healthy lifestyles. Choosing these healthy habits can help us maintain our health and happiness and lower our risks for dementia. Healthy habits can also improve our quality of life if we do experience cognitive decline.

We know what works. AARP, for example, recommends Six Pillars of Brain Health that are endorsed by experts around the world: social engagement, mental stimulation, stress management, exercise, eating right and adequate sleep. Studies also point to the health benefits of managing our blood pressure and blood sugar.

Even while knowing, not enough people use this knowledge. Change is hard. Habits are tough to break. But this report shows that change is possible. The experts offer an assortment of tips and suggestions to help us achieve and sustain the behaviors needed for better brain health as we age.

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Suggestions include:

- Setting specific goals that are realistic.
- Finding ways to make healthy behaviors enjoyable.
- Celebrating your wins.
- Approaching goals step by step.
- Building upon small successes that can be strengthened over time. After all, Rome wasn't built in a day!
- Using some of your free time to participate in brain health building activities.

Let us all remember, the brain does not always go downhill as we age. Yes, our bodies change over time. However, we can take steps that may prevent, delay or minimize problems that may (or may not) arise. Committing to healthy lifestyles and habits keeps our brains and bodies as sharp as possible through the years.

The Global Council on Brain Health's new report provides a much-needed roadmap to achieve this vision. For more information, visit: [www.aarp.org/health/brain-health/](http://www.aarp.org/health/brain-health/) and click on the global council on brain health section.

Interested in getting a little more help on how to build those healthy habits along the way? Check out AARP's Staying Sharp Brain Health 101 challenge at: [stayingsharp.aarp.org/challenges/](http://stayingsharp.aarp.org/challenges/). The Brain Health Challenge is a fun, guided interactive learning activity designed to help you learn about building healthy habits for brain health.

For more information about Healthy Aging education or resources, please visit our website: [extension.unr.edu](http://extension.unr.edu) and search "Healthy Aging" or contact [healthyaging@unr.edu](mailto:healthyaging@unr.edu).

## Brain Health Foods Word Search Puzzle

J C T H R B O L U C D S  
 N H P N S Z D G O G A M  
 G I G Y L L L L W L N L  
 Z C Z E L Z E F T T F J  
 O K R A N N M B M N T A  
 L P U X I O E P I S F  
 I E L C H M N A Q M F O  
 V A V A S U P N M T G S  
 E S X R E C K S A F U A  
 O T E R H G A R L I C W  
 I D T O N O M A N N I C  
 L M R T P U L U X N A G

### Words to find:

BEANS | CARROT | CHICKPEAS  
 CINNAMON | CUMIN | GARLIC  
 LEMON | MINT | OLIVE OIL | SALT



### Beans are a great choice.

Beans contain alpha-linolenic acid, considered essential because it is the only one of the three omega-3 fatty acids that your body cannot synthesize. Beans offer a great way to avoid the undesired fats, cholesterol and potential toxins frequently linked to other high-omega 3 foods — plus, they are loaded with fiber.

### Kidney Bean and Chickpea Salad

*The bold flavors of the lemon-cumin dressing in this healthy bean salad recipe make it a wonderful side dish to grilled beef or salmon. It's also a star-spangled meatless main dish when served with rice, pasta or whole-wheat couscous. Couscous is a form of pasta available in your grocery store's pasta aisle.*

#### Ingredients for Dressing:

1 small clove garlic, chopped  
 1 teaspoon kosher salt, divided  
 1 teaspoon olive oil  
 ¼ cup lemon juice  
 2 tablespoons ground cumin  
 ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

#### Ingredients for Salad:

2, 15-ounce cans dark red kidney beans, rinsed  
 1, 15-ounce can chickpeas, rinsed  
 1 cup carrot, finely diced  
 1 ½ cups fresh parsley, chopped  
 ½ cup fresh mint, chopped



**Directions:** 1) Sprinkle garlic with ½ teaspoon salt and mash with the side of a knife or with a fork to form a paste. Scrape the paste into a large bowl. 2) Add the remaining ½ teaspoon salt, oil, lemon juice, cumin and cinnamon and whisk to combine. 3) Stir in kidney beans, chickpeas, carrot, parsley and mint. Serve at room temperature or cold.

For additional recipes: <https://stayingsharp.aarp.org/recipes/>.



### Five Foods Linked to Better Brain Power

- Green Veggies
- Fatty Fish
- Berries
- Tea & Coffee
- Walnuts



For more information on foods linked to better brainpower, check out the following link: [bit.ly/foodsbrainpower](http://bit.ly/foodsbrainpower).

An EEO/AA institution. This material was funded, in part, by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), an equal opportunity provider.

