

MIND YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Use this toolkit to understand and support your brain health as you get older.



This toolkit was created by a team of experts at the University of California, San Francisco and the University of Southern California. It is supported by the California Department of Public Health, Alzheimer's Disease Program. © 2024, funded under contract #23-10608.

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We're also online. Go to BrainHealthToolkit.com for the digital toolkit & to learn more.

**Brain
health is for
everyone.**



**Let's take
care of
each other.**

**Your brain is
amazing.
It manages
memories,
movement,
speech,
and more.
It's important
to keep your
brain healthy
to stay active
and engaged
in life.**

How does brain health relate to dementia?

Dementia is a decline in memory or thinking that disrupts daily life. It comes from diseases that affect your brain health.

Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia. Risk of dementia increases with age, but it's not a normal part of aging.



Can I prevent dementia?

There is no certain way to prevent dementia.

But moving your body, prioritizing sleep, connecting with others, and learning new things may help reduce your risk.

It's *also* important to:

- Quit smoking
- Limit alcohol
- Take care of health issues



Brain Health Toolkit



1 — Check In

Understand your brain health using the Check In tool. Learn the difference between typical aging and signs that you should talk to your doctor.



2 — Share Notes

Prepare to talk with your doctor using the Share Notes tool. Stay on top of your brain health before, during, and after your doctor's appointments.

Look to the last tool for weekly tips to support brain health.



3 — Start Small

Find fun and easy ways to move your body, prioritize your sleep, connect with others, and learn new things.

It's like a desktop calendar





TOOL 1



CHECK IN

Everyone notices changes in how they think and feel as they age. Learn 5 warning signs and know when to talk to your doctor.

Your brain is aging, and that's normal.

Small changes in thinking and memory may surprise you, but should not disrupt your daily life.

Watch for changes that disrupt your life.

If you're having new problems thinking, speaking, or remembering, this could be a sign to talk to your doctor.

This is *typical* aging.



Forget a detail,
but remember
it later



Pause before
remembering
which word
to use



Make a mistake
while doing
something hard



Need help
while doing
something new

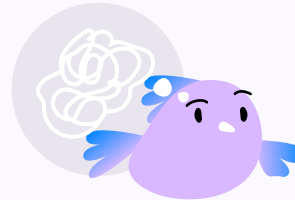


Have less energy
than you used to

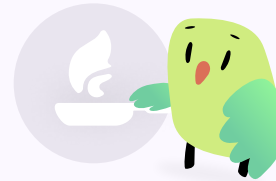
These are *warning* signs.



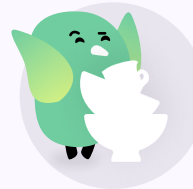
A hard time
remembering
recent events
in your life



Trouble
expressing your
thoughts and
ideas



Problems
following plans
with many steps



Struggle to do
familiar, daily
tasks



Harder to get
started on
things you enjoy

THIS IS TYPICAL AGING

You forget a detail, but remember it later.

It's typical to forget the name of an acquaintance but then remember it.

Or to confuse when you're supposed to meet a friend for coffee.

THIS IS A WARNING SIGN

You have a harder time remembering recent events in your life.

It's not typical to forget the name of a close friend.

Or to forget that you attended a major family event.



THIS IS TYPICAL AGING

**You pause
before
remembering
the right word.**

It's typical to feel like a word is "on the tip of your tongue" for a moment.

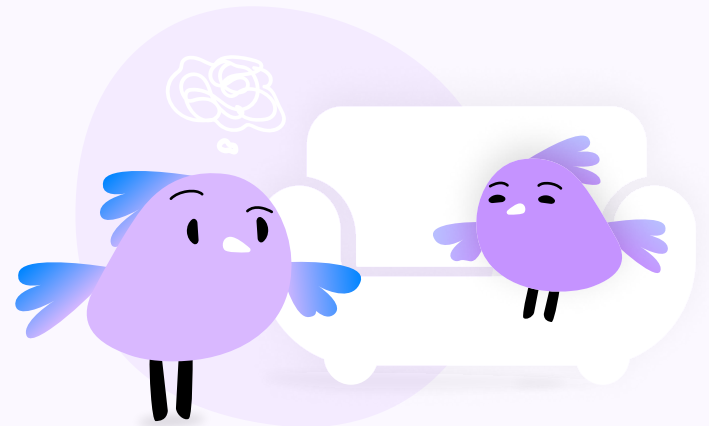
Or to use a word that isn't quite right because you forgot the more exact word.

THIS IS A WARNING SIGN

**You have
more trouble
expressing
your thoughts
and ideas.**

It's not typical to have problems following a conversation.

Or to often feel confused by the story in a book or TV show.



THIS IS TYPICAL AGING

**You make
a mistake
while doing
something hard.**

It's typical to have trouble following the rules of a complicated new game.

Or to miss an occasional monthly payment.

THIS IS A WARNING SIGN

**You have more
problems
following plans
with many steps.**

It's not typical to have problems following the rules of a game you've played many times.

Or to have problems keeping track of your bills when you didn't before.



THIS IS TYPICAL AGING

You need help while learning something new.

It's typical to have trouble finding your way around a new bus terminal or airport.

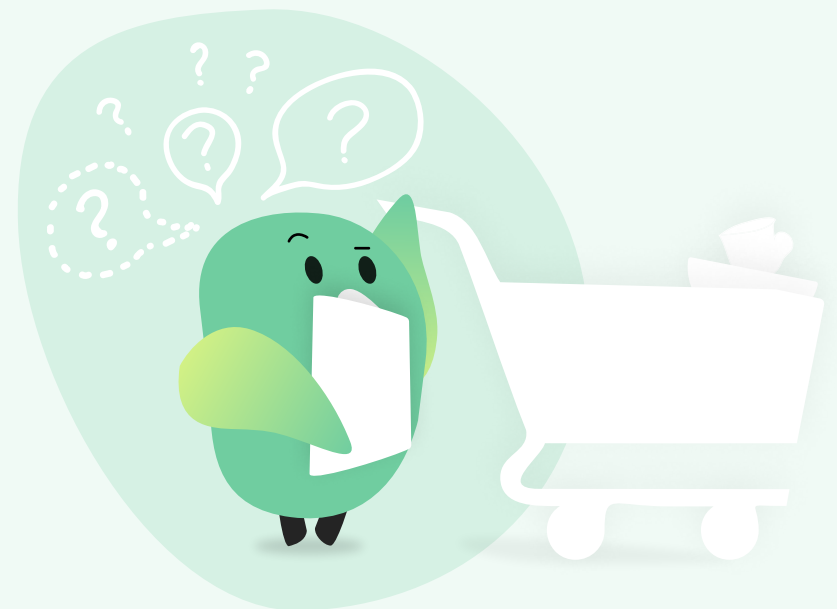
Or to need more practice learning a new hobby or skill.

THIS IS A WARNING SIGN

You struggle to do familiar, daily tasks.

It's not typical to feel lost in familiar places.

Or to struggle to keep track of your medications or to-dos.



THIS IS TYPICAL AGING

You have less energy than you used to.

It's typical to skip an activity once in a while.

Or to feel tired after an afternoon of activities.

THIS IS A WARNING SIGN

It's harder to get started on things you enjoy.

It's not typical to feel like you can't be bothered to do your favorite hobbies.

Or to not see your friends as much since you don't reach out anymore.





It's always good to *Check In.*

Keep the signs in mind. Return here to check in every so often, even if you did not notice any warning signs.

Share with people close to you, and ask if they have noticed any changes. Those who know us best can help us understand our brain health.

What if I think I have signs?

Make an appointment with your primary care doctor. There are many reasons you might experience warning signs. Your doctor can help you find out why.

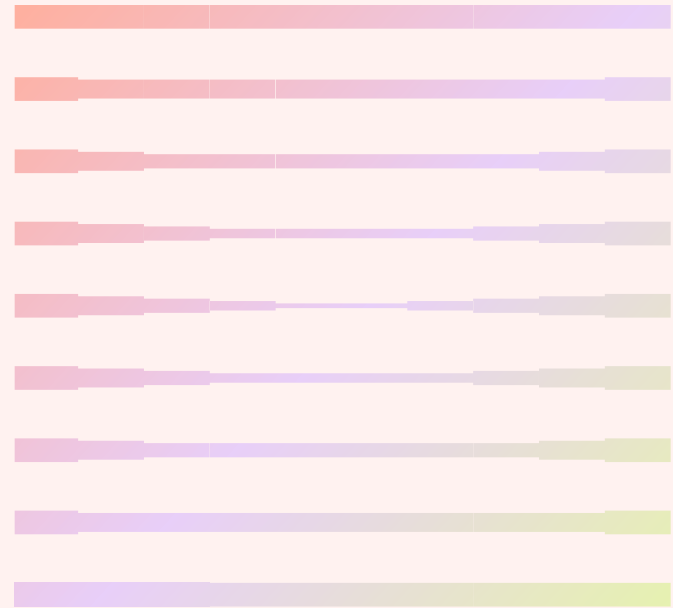
When you call to schedule the visit, you might tell them you've noticed changes in your brain health.

Use the *Share Notes* tool to prepare for your doctor's visit. Turn the page to get started.





TOOL 2



SHARE NOTES

Learn how to prepare for your doctor's appointments.

Take notes to make the most of your time with your healthcare team.

Use for health appointments.

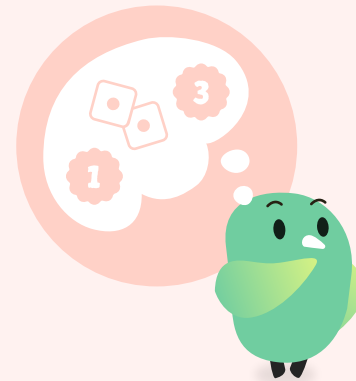
Caring for your medical conditions helps you live a full life as you age.

Partner with your healthcare team and people you trust to support your brain health.

Unfold this page to learn how to make the most of your doctor's visits.

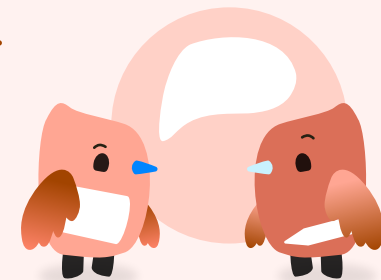
Before your visit:

Write down questions and concerns to bring to your visit.



Pick 3 priorities for your visit.

Ask someone you trust to come with you.



While you're there:



Write down
key information.

Advocate for yourself.
Don't be afraid
to speak up if
you feel unsure.



Confirm next steps
before you leave
the doctor's office.

Prepare to talk to your doctor about your brain health.

If you've noticed changes in your brain health, take notes about your experiences.

Taking notes can help your doctor understand why the changes are happening.

It can also help to talk to people you trust about your concerns and find out what they've noticed.

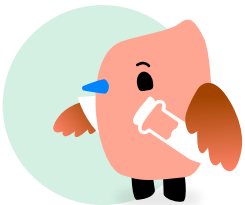
When you share brain health concerns, your doctor might:



Ask you questions about what you are experiencing.



Test your memory and thinking.



Order blood tests and brain imaging, if needed.



**Remember:
everyone's
health
journey looks
different.
Work together
with your
doctor to find
what is best
for you.**

Take notes on these pages.

If you have a camera on your phone, take a picture in case you forget your notes.



TEAR-OUT SHEETS →

APPOINTMENT DATE

DOCTOR NAME

TAKE NOTES BEFORE YOUR VISIT

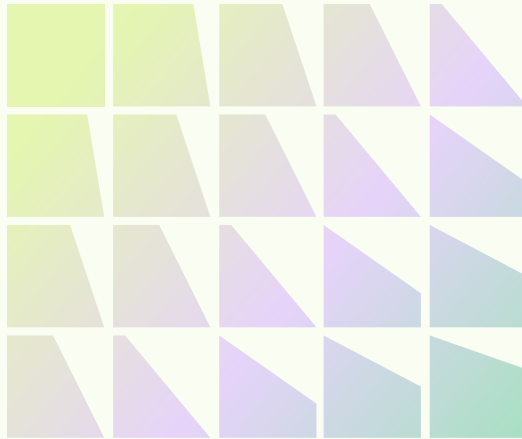
NEXT APPOINTMENT DATE

TAKE NOTES DURING YOUR VISIT

NOTE YOUR NEXT STEPS



TOOL 3



START SMALLER

Weekly tips to
support your
brain health.

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Instructions

There are many ways to support your brain health. These cards offer simple tips to try.

Here are 8 tips – one to try each week. We hope you'll discover what healthy habits work for you.

Go to BrainHealthToolkit.com to download a full deck of 52 weekly tips.

Start Small means :

Seeing which tips make you feel good. Pick and choose what works for you.

Put these tips somewhere you're likely to remember them – on your desk, counter, or nightstand.



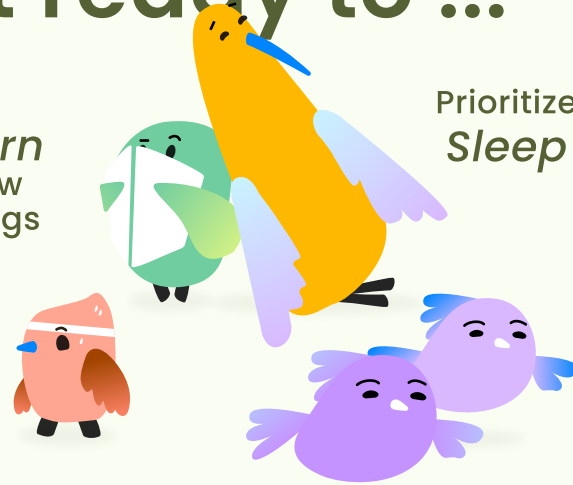
Get ready to ...

*Learn
new
things*

*Prioritize
Sleep*

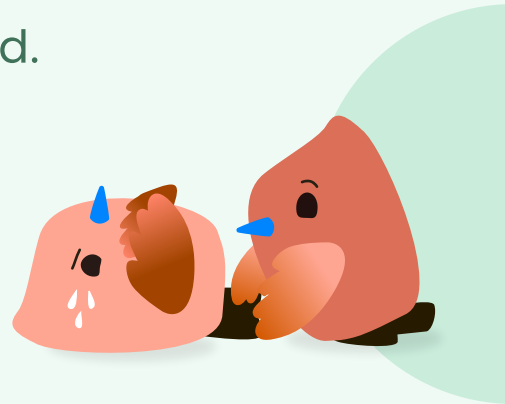
*Move
your
body*

*Connect
with
others*



Move

Exercise with a friend.
You can keep
each other going.



Sleep

Go to bed and
wake up at the same
time every day, even
on the weekends.



Connect

A short chat can make a difference. Ask the store clerk about their day, or greet your mail carrier.



Move

Put on a song and dance to it, any way you like.



Challenge

Try to dance for at least 5 minutes without stopping.

Learn

Drop in on an adult education class at your local community center.



Challenge

Find a class at your local community college and sign up for it.

Sleep

Get some natural light during the day. It helps you feel sleepy at night.



Learn

Read about
a historical event
that has always
interested you.



Connect

Practice gratitude.
Say thank you
to someone
who supports you.

