

How to Boost your Cognitive Fitness

Cognitive development is often associated only with babies and children while many adults think they can't or don't need to develop cognitively themselves.

Studies have shown that reduced cognitive function can age us, prematurely reducing our life quality and expectancy.

It is medically proven that people who have advanced stages of dementia don't live as long as people without these conditions. Thankfully, research has shown that the adult brain can keep developing.

When the brain is working, it produces new cells and forms new neural connections. This activity is called neuroplasticity.

Every time we learn something new, try a new activity, or even think about a new concept, the brain will rewire by producing new cells and neural paths in response to these activities. Therefore, adults can keep their brain growing and protect their cognitive functioning as they age.

Improving cognitive ability

There are many ways to develop your cognition and lessen the chances of your cognitive ability declining or developing dementia. Here are some suggestions.

Exercise increases blood flow to the brain, particularly the part responsible for memory. One study demonstrated that fit people have better cognitive functioning. Many other studies show that exercise increases one's ability to learn, handle stressful situations, make clear decisions and recall facts and memories.

Television and reading can both improve your cognitive function. However, there is a difference between staring at the TV while 'The Bachelorette' is on and watching an educational show or documentary. Television can be cognitively enhancing when it takes effort to understand what you're watching – thus stimulating questions, ideas, or giving enlightening moments.

It's the same for reading. Reading a gossip magazine takes less brain power than reading a magazine like National Geographic. You can develop new connections in your brain by reading something that's instructive instead of merely entertaining.

After reading or watching TV, try to recall what you just learned and tell someone about it. This will increase your retention.

NSW Governor meets Maitland and Port Stephens Support Groups

Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales was the guest of honour at an informal gathering with Maitland and Port Stephens Parkinson's Support Groups on Wednesday, 26 June.

There are more than 550 people living with Parkinson's disease in the Maitland Local Government Area and another 460 in the Port Stephens area. Taking into account carers and

family members, there are more than 2,000 people in this region of New South Wales who are in some way impacted by Parkinson's disease.

"Her Excellency took a keen interest in our lives and challenges. She also shared her own insights into the disease, gained from having close colleagues who were diagnosed – and even personally assisting a gentleman with Parkinson's in distress who she encountered on the street outside Government House," said John Horsnell, Leader of the Maitland Support Group.



‘Engaging Conversations’ Podcast Interview with CEO and Board Chair of Parkinson’s NSW.

Transforming Parkinson’s Care: Advocacy Empathy and Community Action

Sep 11 2024. Mary Kay Walker, CEO of Parkinson’s NSW, and Rachel Tanny, Chair of the Board were interviewed on Engaging Conversations, a podcast that aims to connect people with the pulse of their local communities.

Hosted by Leon Goltsman, Co-Founder of Ecolibrium, “This week, on Engaging Conversations, I speak with the CEO and Board Chair of Parkinson’s NSW to uncover the real impact and determine what needs to change. These powerful insights could inspire our elected officials to take action.”

[LINK TO AUDIO PODCAST](#)

EPISODE SUMMARY by Host Leon Goltsman.

What if you could change the course of Parkinson’s disease for thousands of people? Join us on a compelling journey with Mary Kay Walker, CEO of Parkinson’s NSW, and Rachel Tanny, Chair of the Board. You’ll hear their deeply personal stories, from Mary Kay’s pivot from corporate life driven by her advocacy for the ageing brain to Rachel’s dedication fuelled by her aged-care experiences. They highlight the critical need for better healthcare services and the urgent political action to address this rapidly growing neurological condition.

Our dialogue dives into the mission at the heart of Parkinson’s NSW. Mary Kay and Rachel open up about their daily operations, supported by vital services like an 1800 info line and counselling. They are all driven by a budget that relies heavily on community donations. Learn about the impactful work of their community nursing and support groups and their push for state and federal funding to ensure sustainable support. We highlight real-life success stories demonstrating their services’ life-saving potential and strategic priorities to meet the needs of the rising number of people with Parkinson’s.

In this candid episode, we also explore the unseen aspects of Parkinson’s disease, from depression and mood swings to its effect on those who are living with it. The conversation touches on the significance of empathy and communication in building trust in vulnerable communities. Discover how businesses and community organisations can partner with Parkinson’s NSW to create a more supportive environment.

As we wrap up, the emphasis is placed on the urgent need for increased governmental involvement and advocacy to improve healthcare interventions, prevent unnecessary suffering and enhance the quality of life for those affected by Parkinson’s. Tune in and discover how to be part of this crucial conversation.

World Parkinson Congress 2026 Scheduled

Mark your diaries... the 7th World Parkinson Congress is scheduled to be held in Phoenix, Arizona, USA from May 24 to 27 in 2026. The tentative program is as follows:

Sat, May 23, 2026

Leadership Forum 9am – 5pm

Sun, May 24, 2026

Pre-congress courses 9am – 5pm

Opening Ceremony 6pm – 7pm

Welcome Reception 7pm – 9pm

Mon, May 25, 2026

Core program (TBA)

Tue, May 26, 2026

Core program (TBA)

Wed, May 27, 2026

Closing Remarks 6pm – 7pm

Regularly updated information can be found on the Congress web site:

www.WPC2026.org

Learn something new

Take up a new hobby or activity that requires learning something new. Here are some activities that involve learning: gardening, antiques, learning a musical instrument, raising chickens, learning a foreign language, or selling items on the Internet.

Reading books, taking classes, attending conferences, or joining organisations related to your hobby. All of these require learning and develop new neural connections and helps replenish cell loss due to ageing or Parkinson's.

Puzzles are a great way to build new brain connections. There are many types of puzzles such as word-oriented brain teasers such as crosswords, or those that don't involve words – such as Sudoku. Doing a variety of puzzles is particularly stimulating for your brain. Start with one puzzle type, and as you get better, switch to another type. Your brain will be challenged with each change of puzzle type.

Subscribe to The Morning Email. Games involving strategy, as Scrabble, Trivial Pursuit, Monopoly are excellent for brain stimulation. Along with Chess and Mahjong or cards are excellent games as most games are different, requiring a different set of strategies each time. Visiting museums, zoos and historical sites will help you build better cognition. Don't be a passive visitor. Read the signage next to the exhibits, try to repeat the key information to yourself and then repeat it again or tell someone after your visit.

Enrol yourself into an education course for something you're interested in. Community colleges have inexpensive courses, giving you the opportunity to learn new things, and simple tests that will force you to recall the information.

Workshops, conferences, and other gatherings where professionals in their field share their knowledge offer another way to build cognitive function through active learning.

So don't just think about exercising your body. Your mental fitness is just as important, if not more important than your physical fitness.

References:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3936925/>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4609235/>

Spring into Action for The Great Parkinson's Tea Party!

Help us raise funds for a fantastic cause and connect with friends and family.

Learn more

<https://www.pitchinforparkinsons.org.au/event/the-great-parkinsons-tea-party>

For evidence-based information and advice call the Parkinson's NSW InfoLine

1800 644 189

Parkinson's NSW InfoLine

Email: pnsw@parkinsonsnsw.org.au

