

# Wellness Wednesday



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## 5 Habits That Can Significantly Enhance Your Brain Health

Taking care of your brain is crucial for overall well-being. Just like we brush our teeth to prevent dental issues and apply sunscreen to protect our skin, it's essential to prioritize brain health to ensure optimal functioning. Whether you're in your 20s or 60s, there are five expert-backed habits that you can adopt to give your brain a well-deserved leg-up. In this Wellness Wednesday, we will delve into each of these habits and explore how they can drastically improve your brain health.

### 1. Regular Exercise: Boosting Brain Power Through Physical Activity

Physical exercise is not only beneficial for your body but also for your brain. Research has shown that regular exercise can improve cognitive function and memory. When you engage in physical activity, it increases blood flow to the brain, promoting the growth of new neurons and enhancing connectivity between different regions. Additionally, exercise stimulates the release of chemicals in the brain that are responsible for improving mood and reducing stress.

To incorporate exercise into your routine, you can start with simple activities like walking, jogging, or cycling. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week, or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise. You can also consider incorporating strength training exercises to improve muscle strength and overall fitness. Remember, consistency is key, so find activities that you enjoy and make them a regular part of your schedule.

### 2. A Nutrient-Rich Diet: Fueling Your Brain for Optimal Performance

Just as a car needs the right fuel to run smoothly, your brain requires proper nutrition to function at its best. A nutrient-rich diet can provide the essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that support brain health. Incorporating foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats can provide the necessary nutrients for optimal brain function.

Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fatty fish like salmon and sardines, are particularly beneficial for brain health. These fatty acids play a vital role in building brain cell membranes and reducing inflammation. Additionally, antioxidants found in colorful fruits and vegetables can protect the brain from oxidative stress and age-related decline.

It's important to maintain a balanced diet and avoid excessive intake of processed foods, sugary snacks, and saturated fats. Remember to stay hydrated by drinking an adequate amount of water throughout the day, as even mild dehydration can impair brain function.

### 3. Quality Sleep: Resting Your Brain for Better Cognitive Function

Sleep is often underestimated when it comes to brain health, but it plays a crucial role in memory consolidation and cognitive function. During sleep, the brain processes and consolidates information learned throughout the day. Lack of quality sleep can impact attention, concentration, and problem-solving abilities.

To improve your sleep quality, establish a consistent sleep schedule and create a relaxing bedtime routine. Avoid electronic devices or stimulating activities before bed, as the blue light emitted by screens can interfere with the production of melatonin, a hormone that regulates sleep. Create a sleep-friendly environment by keeping your bedroom dark, quiet, and at a comfortable temperature.

If you struggle with sleep issues, consider practicing relaxation techniques such as meditation or deep breathing exercises. If the problem persists, it's advisable to consult with a healthcare professional to identify and address any underlying sleep disorders.

### 4. Mental Stimulation: Exercising Your Brain to Enhance Cognitive Abilities

Just as physical exercise strengthens your muscles, mental stimulation exercises your brain and enhances cognitive abilities. Engaging in activities that challenge your brain can improve memory, attention, and problem-solving skills. It can also help build cognitive reserve, which acts as a buffer against age-related decline and neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's.

There are various ways to incorporate mental stimulation into your daily routine. Reading books, solving puzzles, playing strategy games, learning a new language, or picking up a musical instrument are all excellent ways to keep your brain active. Additionally, engaging in social activities and maintaining meaningful relationships can also promote cognitive health.

### 5. Stress Management: Prioritizing Mental Well-being to Support Brain Health

Chronic stress can have detrimental effects on brain health, leading to cognitive problems, memory impairment, and increased risk of mental health disorders. It's crucial to develop effective stress management techniques to protect your brain and overall well-being.

There are numerous strategies for managing stress, and what works for one person may not work for another. Some effective techniques include practicing mindfulness meditation, engaging in physical activities like yoga or tai chi, deep breathing exercises, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. It's also essential to prioritize self-care by engaging in activities that bring you joy and relaxation, such as spending time in nature, pursuing hobbies, or connecting with loved ones.

Seeking support from a mental health professional can also be beneficial if stress becomes overwhelming or starts to interfere with your daily life. They can provide guidance and help develop personalized coping strategies to manage stress effectively, properly, and seek periodic professional foot exams.

Incorporating these five habits into your lifestyle can significantly improve your brain health and overall well-being. Regular exercise, a nutrient-rich diet, quality sleep, mental stimulation, and stress management are all key factors in maintaining a healthy brain. By prioritizing brain care and adopting these habits, you can enhance cognitive function, improve memory, and reduce the risk of age-related decline. Remember, it's never too early or too late to start taking care of your brain. So why wait? Start implementing these habits today for a healthier and happier brain tomorrow.



# HOMEMADE HUMMUS



## INGREDIENTS

- 1 can (15.5 ounces) of chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1/2 cup of crushed ice water
- 3 tablespoons of tahini
- 1/2 teaspoon of ground cumin
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 clove of garlic, crushed
- 3/4 teaspoon of kosher salt

### Optional garnishes:

- 1 tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil
- Sweet paprika
- Everything bagel seasoning

### Why Make Your Own Hummus?

Store-bought hummus may be convenient, but once you realize how easy it is to make from scratch, you'll never want to go back. Here are a few reasons why making your own hummus is worth the effort:

**Control over Ingredients:** When you make hummus at home, you have complete control over the quality and quantity of ingredients. You can choose to use organic chickpeas, high-quality tahini, and adjust the flavors to your preference.

**Healthier Option:** By making your own hummus, you can reduce the amount of oil used in the recipe, making it a healthier snack or appetizer. You can also customize the seasoning and reduce the amount of salt if desired.

**Creamy Texture:** The secret to achieving a super creamy hummus without excessive amounts of oil is using a high-speed blender and adding crushed ice water. This technique creates a light and fluffy texture that is hard to achieve with store-bought hummus.

### Nutrition Information

Serving: 1/4 of recipe, about 27 pieces, Calories: 216 kcal, Carbohydrates: 38 g, Protein: 7.5 g, Fat: 4 g, Saturated Fat: 1.5 g, Cholesterol: 5 mg, Sodium: 679.5 mg, Fiber: 4 g, Sugar: 13 g



## INSTRUCTIONS



### Step 1: Blend the Ingredients

To make the creamy blender hummus, follow these steps:

- Place the drained and rinsed chickpeas, crushed ice water, tahini, ground cumin, lemon juice, crushed garlic, and kosher salt into a high-speed blender.
- Blend the ingredients on high speed until you achieve a smooth and creamy consistency. If the hummus is too thick, you can add a tablespoon of water to thin it out.

**Pro Tip:** If you don't have a blender, you can also use a food processor to make hummus. However, keep in mind that the texture may not be as creamy as when using a high-speed blender.

### Step 2: Serve and Garnish

Once the hummus is blended to perfection, it's time to serve and garnish. Follow these steps:

- Using a rubber spatula, transfer the hummus from the blender to a serving dish. Scrape the sides of the blender to ensure you get every last bit of creamy goodness.
- Use the back of a spoon to smooth the surface of the hummus.
- Drizzle the hummus with a tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil for added flavor and richness.
- Sprinkle sweet paprika and everything bagel seasoning on top of the hummus for a touch of color and additional seasoning.

## FEATURED EXERCISE

<https://www.self.com/gallery/hiit-cardio-workout>

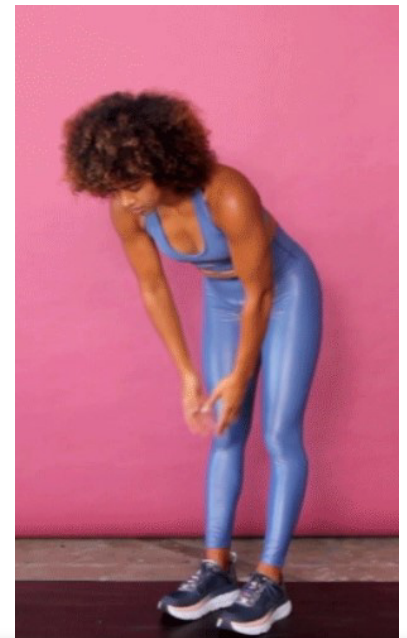
## Featured Exercise ► Upper Body: I-Y-T Raise



## » Do it:

- Stand with feet shoulder-width apart. With your core engaged, hinge forward slightly, keeping a slight bend in your knees.
- Bring your arms up straight, keeping them in line with your shoulders. This is the I part of the exercise. Bring your arms down.
- Bring your arms up straight and out at a 45-degree angle. This is the Y part of the exercise. Bring your arms down.
- Bring your arms directly out to the sides, bringing your shoulder blades together. This is the T part of the exercise. Bring your arms down. This is one rep.

The I-Y-T raise works the muscles in the back of your body, and because you're hinged forward, the move feels more intense than if you were standing straighter, giving you more efficiency for a HIIT combination.

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Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



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