

Home > Columns > Favorite Things

Minding Your Health

By Tracy Rubert

Learn the secrets of optimum brain wellness from best-selling author Daniel G. Amen, MD

[ShareThis](#)

One of the most annoying things about getting older is having those “senior moments.” You know the ones. Maybe you’re discussing health care reform with a friend over lunch. Then the waiter distracts you, and poof! There goes your train of thought. Or maybe you have more serious concerns, such as wanting to know how to prevent Alzheimer’s disease. Enter neuroscientist, psychiatrist, and brain-imaging expert Daniel G. Amen, MD. Not only is he the founder of the world-renowned Amen Clinics, he is also the author of many books on the subject of brain health, including The New York Times best seller *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life*, which spawned his popular PBS special of the same title, and the forthcoming, *Change Your Brain, Change Your Body*. Here, Amen explains how to keep our most complex organ in top shape, and why doing so will improve every aspect of our health and our lives.

Q: How can we can optimize brain function to enhance overall health?

A: In general, get plenty of physical and mental exercise; sleep at least seven hours each night; follow a brain-healthy diet; avoid placing yourself at risk for head injuries; avoid toxins, such as too much caffeine, all nicotine, and too much alcohol; practice meditation and gratitude; and kill your ANTs (automatic negative thoughts). How you think moment-by-moment plays a primary role in how you feel.

Q: What are the most important foods for healthy brain function?

A: Lean protein—chicken, fish, lean pork, and beef—all help build neurons. Healthy fats such as fish, avocados, and raw nuts all maintain nerve cell membranes and myelin. Also important are complex, low-glycemic carbohydrates in the form of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Include lots of dietary antioxidants, such as blueberries. Avoid artificial sweeteners, food preservatives, saturated fat, MSG, and artificial food colors.

Q: How does obesity affect brain function?

A: Fat stores toxic materials, and obesity doubles the risk for Alzheimer’s disease. There are at least five different brain types of obesity. This is critical to know because most people think one diet should fit everyone, and that isn’t the case. There are compulsive overeaters, impulsive overeaters, impulsive-compulsive overeaters, sad overeaters, and anxious overeaters. Knowing your type can help you get the right treatment.



Quick Takes

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO ACCOMPLISH ALL YOU DO?

My love of people and desire to be as healthy as possible. Plus, I love my work.

HOW DO YOU START YOUR DAY?

By hugging my wife, getting a hug from my dog, and having a protein-fruit shake.

WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE WAY TO UNWIND?

Table tennis.

IF YOU WERE STRANDED ON A DESERT ISLAND, WHAT ONE FOOD WOULD YOU WANT TO HAVE WITH YOU?

Blueberries.

WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE GUILTY PLEASURE?

Besides my wife? Pinkberry pomegranate yogurt!

Now More Than Ever...
Trust Your Immune Health to Ester-C.[®]*

24-Hour Immune Support*
Patented, Documented, Clinically Studied

*These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat cure, or prevent any disease.

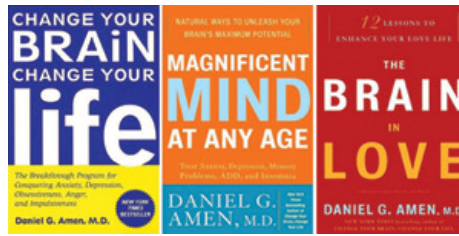
VITAMIN CODE[®]
Garden of Life
GROW BONE SYSTEM

DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK OFFER*

Restrictions apply
click for details

Q: How important is exercise for optimal brain function? How important is sleep?

A: Exercise boosts blood flow and enhances new learning. Adequate sleep is critical; less sleep is associated with lower blood flow to the brain and poorer decision-making.



Q: What are some of the most important supplements for optimal brain function?

A: Fish oil, multivitamins, acetyl-L-carnitine, alpha-lipoic acid, ginkgo, and vitamin D. Most Americans are lacking in vitamin D and omega-3s.

Q: What's your best piece of advice for healthful aging and preventing Alzheimer's disease?

A: Prevent the risk factors for Alzheimer's disease: hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, strokes, depression, head injuries, alcoholism, smoking, and obesity.

Related Articles:

- [The Magic Missing Piece](#)
- [Prevent Alzheimer's](#)
- [Be Well with Vitamin B3](#)
- [Longevity by Prevention](#)
- [Turn Back the Clock!](#)
- [Bacopa: Brains & Beauty](#)
- [Wild Salmon for Supper](#)

