

Computer use and exercise combo may reduce the odds of having memory loss

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You think your computer has a lot of memory ... if you keep using your computer you may, too.

Combining mentally stimulating activities, such as using a computer, with moderate exercise decreases your odds of having memory loss more than computer use or exercise alone, a Mayo Clinic study shows. Previous studies have shown that exercising your body and your mind will help your memory but the new study, published in the May 2012 issue of Mayo Clinic Proceedings, reports a synergistic interaction between computer activities and moderate exercise in "protecting" the brain function in people better than 70 years old.

Researchers studied 926 people in Olmsted County, Minn., ages 70 to 93, who completed self-reported questionnaires on physical exercise, and computer use within one year prior of the date of interview. Moderate physical exercise was defined as brisk walking, hiking, aerobics, strength training, golfing without a golf cart, swimming, doubles tennis, yoga, martial arts, using exercise machines and weightlifting. Mentally stimulating activities included reading, crafts, computer use, playing games, playing music, group and social and artistic activities and watching less television. Of those activities the study singled out computer use because of its popularity, said study author Yonas E. Geda, M.D., MSc, a physician scientist with Mayo Clinic in Arizona.

"The aging of baby boomers is projected to lead to dramatic increases in

the prevalence of dementia," Dr. Geda said. "As frequent computer use has becoming increasingly common among all age groups, it is important to examine how it relates to aging and dementia. Our study further adds to this discussion."

The study examined exercise, computer use and the relationship to neurological risks such as mild cognitive impairment, Dr. Geda says. Mild cognitive impairment is the intermediate stage between normal [memory loss](#) that comes with aging and early Alzheimer's disease. Of the study participants who did not exercise and did not use a computer, 20.1 percent were cognitively normal and 37.6 percent showed signs of mild cognitive impairment. Of the participants who both exercise and use a computer, 36 percent were cognitively normal and 18.3 percent showed signs of MCI.

Dr. Geda expects that this study will lead to more research on this topic.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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