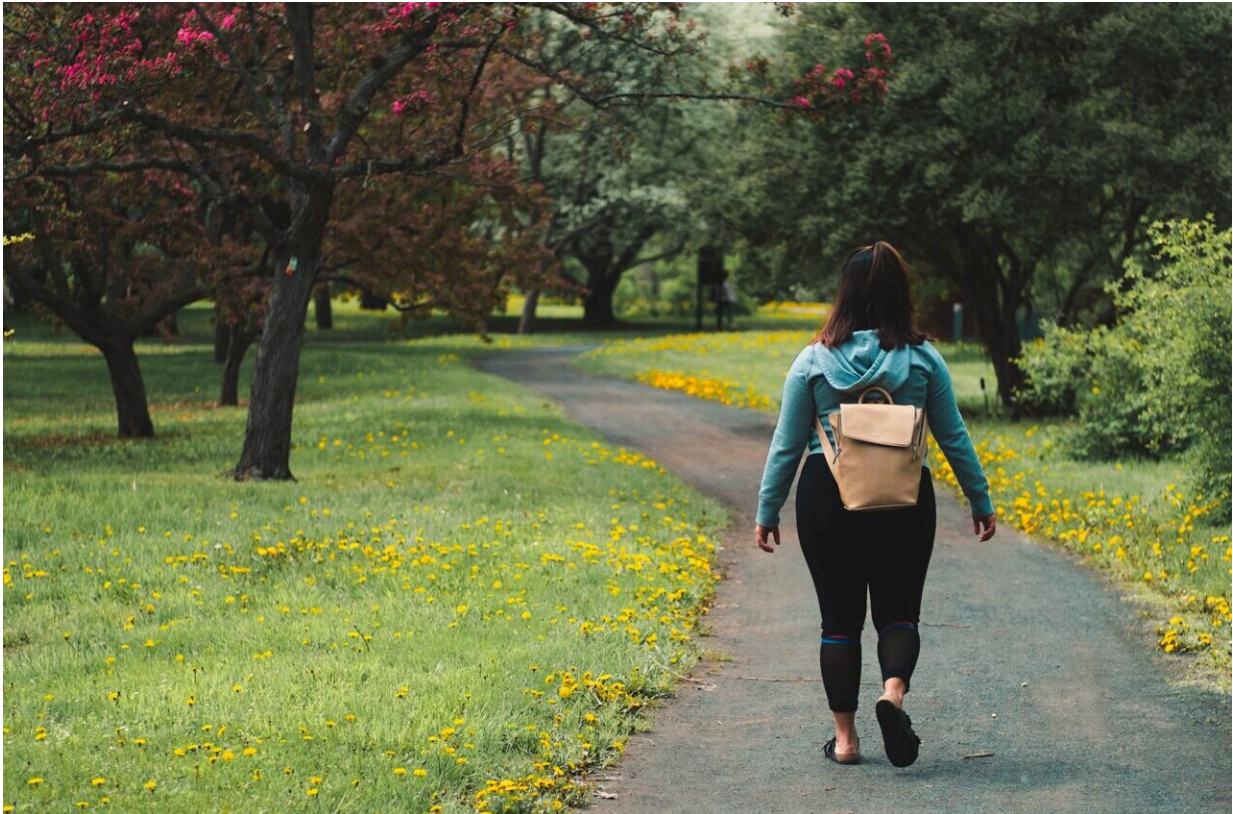


Brain boosters from exercise and diet

February 3 2024, by Barbara Intermill, Tribune News Service



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Studies show that physical activity is actually a mental health exercise. One article that states just 15 minutes of walking, especially in the out-of-doors, can boost mood and reduce feelings of depression.

People seem to think more clearly after a brisk walk as well. It makes

sense. As the heart pumps oxygen and nutrients to working muscles, the brain gets the same benefits.

Are there foods that might help our brains stay focused?

In 2015, scientists reported on a diet that was found to help slow the gradual decline in cognitive function we may experience as we age. It was a hybrid of the Mediterranean diet and the DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) cutely named the MIND diet (Mediterranean-DASH Diet Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay).

Foods in this eating style are rich in nutrients and other substances believed to help protect the brain from unhealthy conditions called oxidative stress and inflammation.

Researchers from Rush University Medical Center and the Harvard Chan School of Public Health both reported that older people who most closely followed this eating plan for up to 10 years had the slowest rate of cognitive decline compared with those who did not follow this plan as closely.

A subsequent randomized controlled study in 2023 that followed older people for three years on the MIND diet found no significant changes in cognitive tests compared to controls. This has led some researchers to surmise that the longer we follow this pattern, the better.

Here's a general plan suggest by a registered dietitian nutritionist:

Daily: At least three servings of a whole grain, one or more servings of vegetables (emphasis on green leafies), no more than 1 tablespoon of butter. Olive oil as main added fat.

Weekly: At least five servings of nuts, four servings of beans, two servings of berries, two poultry meals and one fish meal. No more than five servings of pastries and sweets (per week, remember), four servings of beef, pork or lamb and one serving of cheese and fried food.

Take it easy on alcohol. A moderate intake (no more than one drink a day for women and two drinks a day for men) may help protect against mental decline, but [excessive alcohol consumption](#) is linked to [early onset dementia](#), according to a 2023 research article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

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