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Brain health



Is the brain the most complex organ in the body? As far as we know. Is it really true that people are capable of using only a small percentage of their brain? Some say so. Others however say no. Few of us would dispute that there is great deal about the human brain that still remains a mystery. What do we know about the brain? It's an essential organ of the body; an organ responsible for determining numerous things including learning and perception of the surrounding environment.



What's the weight of the brain? It's not that heavy; about 3 pounds. Though it contains approximately 100 billion neurons. What are neurons? They transmit pieces of information. Is the brain active. Yes. Even when a person is at rest or asleep.

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The journal 'Science' published an influential article in the year 1907 that psychologist and author William James wrote, which argued that humans only use a small part of their mental resources. Mr. James did not specify the percentage. Though Dale Carnegie referenced a percentage in his 1936 book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. It was 10%, according to his university professor. In the scientific community, there is a belief that neurons make up ~10 percent of the brain's cells. Was the neuron/brain cell percentage figure inadvertently misinterpreted as percentage of brain usage?



Interested in improving brain function? Remember an important fact: Not much unlike any other organ in the human body, an individual's health, lifestyle, diet and exercise is likely to have a direct impact on brain function. Why is this important? Someone said: You are what you eat and that is not good; especially for those people who are prone to eating junk food.

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A balanced diet is a great way to maintain a healthy brain. What's good for a healthy brain? Nuts are rich in antioxidants. Nuts are also high in omega fatty acids. Both of these things are good for brain health! A balanced diet that includes nuts is likely to reduce the risk of developing health issues; some of which may lead to an early onset of dementia. What else?



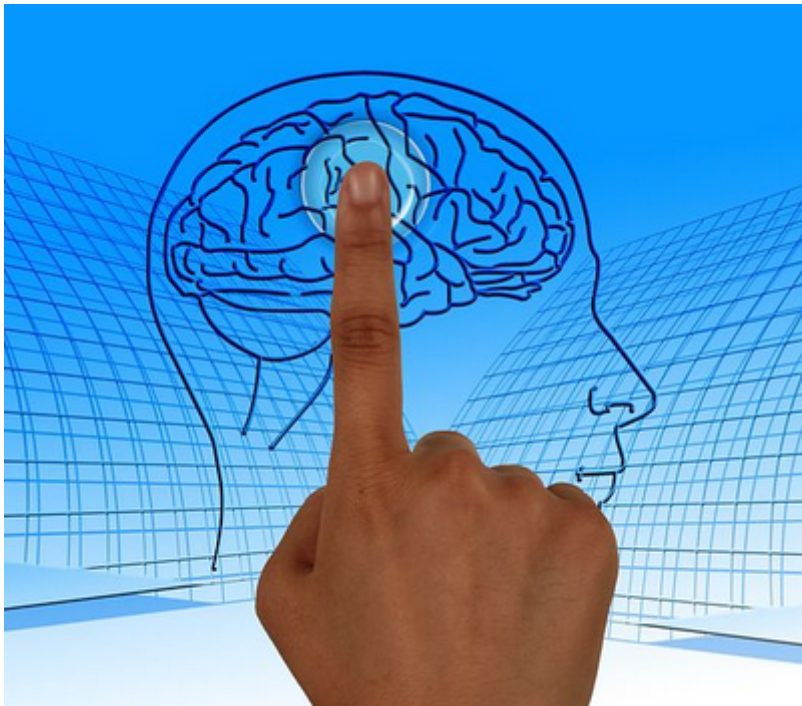
Dark skinned, fruits and vegetables rich in vitamin E. Examples: blueberries, broccoli and spinach. Red peppers and sweet potatoes are rich in beta carotene. Oily fish such as salmon, mackerel and tuna are rich in omega-3 fatty acids that support cognitive function.

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Exercise is likely to reduce the risk of health problems, some of which may lead to brain diseases such as dementia. Routines such as cycling, running, swimming or walking 30 minutes a day may reduce the risk of declining brain function.



Mental functions are likely to improve with regular usage. Train your brain with mental exercises that maintain your health. Brain training is considered a preventative mental health measure, which could reduce the risk of developing dementia. It's a technique with desirable side effects such as improving response time and processing complex information quicker.

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Here are curious questions: Is it true that right-brained people are more creative? Are left-brained people more logical? While a popular belief decades ago, isn't more likely that healthy people are using both hemispheres for different tasks? Does the left hemisphere of the brain strictly process language and does the right hemisphere strictly process emotions? Or is it more likely that the above claims may be subject to criticism in light of what we have learned about brain function?



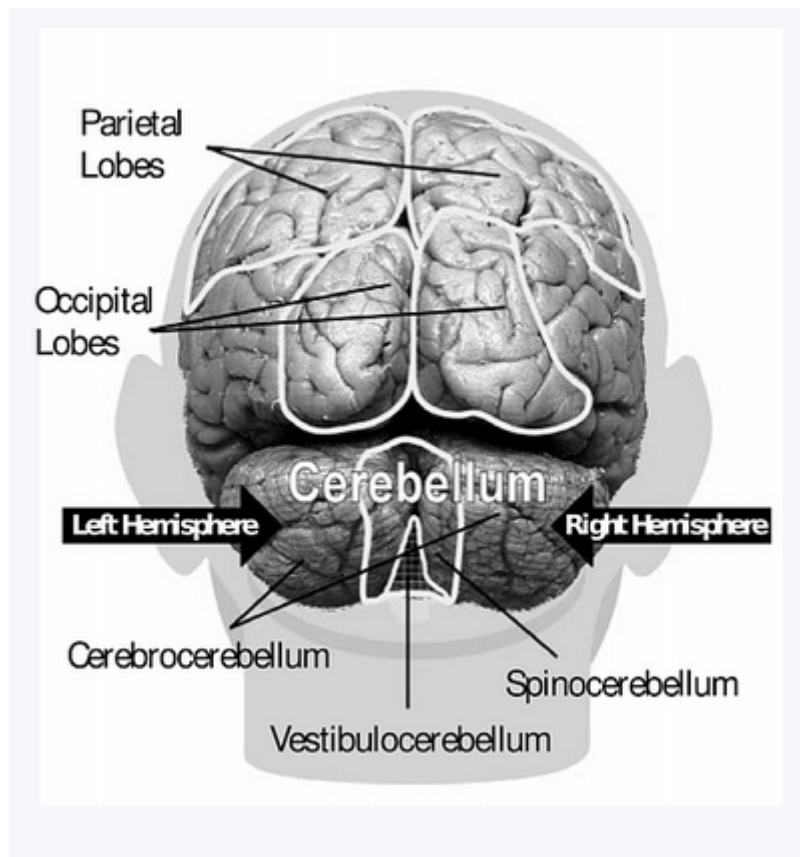
It is believed that long-term alcoholism leads to a myriad of health problems, including brain damage and other diseases. Does drinking alcohol kill brain cells? Does drinking during a pregnancy risk damaging a fetal brain during development? Why take the risk? Babies who are born with fetal alcohol syndrome could have smaller brains with fewer brain cells, which in certain cases could lead to learning and behavioral disabilities. Many women avoid drinking during a pregnancy.

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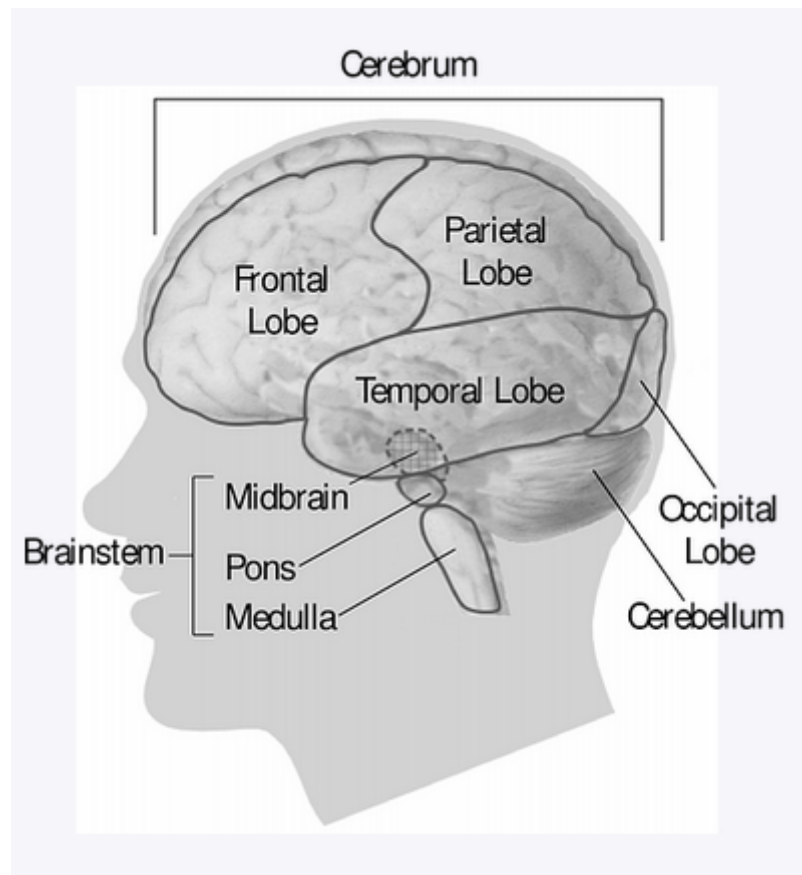
It's widely believed subliminal (concealed) messages are likely to provoke emotional responses in certain types of people; especially those who are unaware that they've received an emotional type of stimulus. Subliminal advertising messages make impressions subconsciously. This controversial approach may persuade some people to make impulsive decisions. Though not all subliminal messages are controversial. Some messages attempt to aid learners during the learning curve. Study aids such as vocabulary recordings during the sleep cycle could improve an individual's ability to recall the words. Such aids are believed to have limited impact and are helpful only for those who have already studied the vocabulary. While asleep, study aids are not especially useful for subjects attempting to learn new information; a baseline is required.



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The human brain is covered in folds referred to as wrinkles; dips within each of these folds are referred to as the 'sulcus'; raised parts of the folds are referred to as the 'gyrus'. The brain starts to develop these fold type wrinkles before birth. During the lifecycle, the brain continues to develop these wrinkles, as it makes new connections and breaks the old ones.



Curiously, the brain represents around 2% of a person's weight but uses 20 % of a person's oxygen and calories. Scientists estimate the brain is ~ 73% water. A ~ 2% rate of brain dehydration impairs attention, memory, and motor skills!

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Studies show that too much cholesterol hurts the heart but cholesterol plays a significant role in a person's brain activity. Lowering cholesterol can be good and bad, as the brain cells certainly cannot survive without cholesterol. Why exactly? Approximately 25% of the body's cholesterol is found in brain cells. Clearly, we still have lots to learn about brain function.

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