

# Unhealthy Brain Habits to Avoid



Several habits can be linked to poor brain health. Among these are sedentary lifestyle, social isolation, inadequate sleep, and chronic stress.

## **Sedentary Lifestyle:**

The average adult spends approximately 6 ½ hours a day sitting. Studies have indicated that sedentary lifestyles are linked to changes in the parts of the brain that are linked to memory function. These brain changes may be a precursor to dementia and cognitive decline. To counteract this effect, it is suggested that you move after 15-30 minutes of sitting. Set a timer on your phone or computer to get up and walk, stretch, or do a 10-minute workout.

## **Social Isolation:**

Loneliness has been linked to depression, cognitive decline, and increased risk for developing Alzheimer's disease. Be intentional about social interactions. Find a group of two or three people that you can call, text, or meet with on a weekly basis so you can have meaningful and mentally engaging interactions.

## **Inadequate Sleep:**

It is recommended that adults get 7-8 hours of sleep per night, but research indicates that approximately one-third of adults do not meet this goal. Studies have linked declining memory, reasoning, and problem-solving abilities with individuals who get fewer than 7 hours of sleep per night. Rather than focusing on getting more sleep, shift your focus to allowing yourself more time to sleep. Try going to bed an hour earlier. Avoid screen time right before going to bed; instead, try reading.

## **Chronic Stress:**

Chronic stress can kill brain cells and shrink the prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain responsible for memory and learning. Develop stress management strategies to help cope with stressful situations. Deep breathing exercises and positive self-talk are just a couple of coping mechanisms.

Source: Harvard Health Publishing ([health.harvard.edu](https://www.health.harvard.edu))