


Mind Over Myth

Debunking 20 Misconceptions for
Optimal Brain Health



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It's Never Too Late or Too Early to Start Thinking About Brain Health

Before moving to Canada, I was an OB-GYN based in Mumbai for many years, performing surgeries and delivering babies.

That chapter of my life closed in 2013 when I decided to pivot my career after completing a functional and metabolic medicine fellowship from the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine.

Why this transition? And why focus on the brain?
The answer is simple but profound.

Like many healthcare providers, I never paid enough attention to assessing my patients' brain health, which dictates every facet of our existence—our relationships, professional achievements, academic performance, and overall well-being.

The Alarming Rise in Cognitive Decline

We are in an unfortunate surge in dementia rates, especially Alzheimer's, the most common form of dementia. Despite significant investments in research, a cure remains elusive. Current medications can, at best, manage symptoms but are not a cure for the disease.

But there's hope.

Here's the silver lining. Contrary to popular belief, cognitive decline isn't inevitable in aging. Alzheimer's, among other forms of dementia, doesn't begin overnight. It's a gradual process spanning 20 to 30 years before manifesting noticeable symptoms.

I call this 20 to 30-year window a "period of opportunity." During this time, multiple proactive steps can significantly lower your risk of future cognitive decline and even dementia. You have an opportunity to reduce your risk of cognitive impairment.

The First Step: Exposing the Myths

You're standing at the edge of your "period of opportunity," a crucial time when you can shape your cognitive destiny. This resource is more than just a guide—it's your catalyst for change. It will equip you with accurate information and actionable steps toward brain health confidently, peak cognitive performance, and quality of life.



Myth 1: Cognitive Decline Is Inevitable With Age.

Fact:

Cognitive decline is not a normal part of aging. Proactive lifestyle changes, like brain-healthy food and optimal exercise, can help you maintain and even improve your brain health at any age.

Myth 2: Weekend Sleep Can Compensate for Weekday Sleep Deficits

Fact:

Sleep inconsistency can harm your brain's cognitive functions, leading to poor decision-making and brain fog. A consistent sleep schedule during weekdays **and** weekends is crucial for long-term brain health.

Myth 3: All Stress Damages The Brain.

Fact:

Not all stress harms brain health. Short-term stress can boost cognitive function and improve memory. Learning stress management techniques can help you harness stress positively.

Myth 4: It's Too Late to Impact My Brain Health

Fact:

It's never too late to make changes that improve your brain health. Even small lifestyle adjustments, like moving more and sitting less can benefit your cognition

Myth 5: I have a family history of Alzheimer's Disease. Therefore I will inevitably have Alzheimer's

Fact:

While genetics play a role, lifestyle changes can often prevent or delay Alzheimer's Disease and are crucial for maintaining healthy cognitive function.



Myth 6: No Symptoms Means High Blood Pressure Isn't Affecting My Brain

Fact:

Hypertension (High blood pressure) often shows no symptoms but can silently harm your brain's blood vessels, putting you at risk for cognitive decline and stroke. Regular check-ups are vital.

Myth 7: Only Elderly People Get Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)

Fact:

Hypertension isn't age-restricted and can even affect school children, having potential long-term consequences on their cognitive abilities, if left unmanaged.

Myth 8: Hypertension Isn't as Serious as Cancer

Fact:

Hypertension can be a silent contributor to various life-threatening conditions, including strokes and cognitive decline, making it crucial to manage brain health.

Myth 9: Hypertension is a Concern for Seniors, Not Me


Fact:

Ignoring hypertension because of your younger age is a misconception. Blood pressure management is crucial at any age to maintain cognitive function and overall brain health.

Myth 10: Hypertension Only Affects Your Heart

Fact:

High blood pressure can damage blood vessels in the brain, contributing to a decline in cognitive functions and increasing the risk of Alzheimer's disease.



Myth 11: A balanced diet alone sufficiently supplies all the nutrients essential for brain health, eliminating the need for nutritional supplements.

Fact:

Although a nutrient-rich diet is vital, it of ten falls short of fulfilling all nutritional requirements. Consider this: consuming two servings of salmon per week yields approximately 3000 mg of EPA and DHA. However, certain individuals may require as much as 3000 mg daily, highlighting the necessity for additional supplementation.

Myth 12: Only Medication Can Control High Blood Pressure

Fact:

Lifestyle changes like diet and exercise are effective additions to medication for managing blood pressure and maintaining good brain health. Medications alone may not be enough.

Myth 13: Blood Sugar is a Non-Issue If I Don't Have Diabetes

Fact:

Regularly monitoring blood glucose levels is essential for everyone. Unregulated levels can negatively impact brain function and increase the risk of cognitive decline, even if you do not have diabetes.

Myth 14: Dementia is an Old Person's Problem

Fact:

Suboptimal blood sugar levels, even in younger adults, can increase the risk of dementia later in life. It's crucial to manage these levels for long-term cognitive health.



Myth 15: Women Have the Same Alzheimer's Risk as Men

Fact:

Women are at a higher risk for Alzheimer's due to factors like hormonal changes during menopause, which can impact brain health by disrupting brain glucose metabolism.

Myth 16: Experiencing Brain Fog Means I'm Destined for Dementia or Alzheimer's Disease

Fact:

Brain fog is a symptom many people experience, but it does not necessarily serve as a precursor to Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia. Brain fog is frequently reported as a lingering symptom of 'long COVID,' and certain autoimmune diseases.

Myth 17: Eating Fatty Fish 3 Times Per Week Provides Brain Fitness

Fact:

While fatty fish are a good source of essential omega-3 fatty acids like DHA, they are insufficient for comprehensive brain health. Your brain uses about 20% of your daily fuel requirements. The best way to fuel your brain is by choosing protein-containing food and good-quality fat over carbohydrates.

Myth 18: Eight Hours of Sleep is Enough for Optimal Brain Health

Fact:

Sleep is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Assessing how you feel when you wake up better indicates whether you've had sufficient rest. While 6.5 to 8 hours may be adequate for some, others may require more sleep for optimal brain function. Sleep duration, quality and regularity are all important.



Myth 19: Hormone Imbalances are Unrelated to Brain Health

Fact:

Hormonal imbalances, such as thyroid dysfunction or perimenopausal/menopausal hormone changes, are key contributors to brain fog and overall cognitive well-being.

Myth 20: Eating Small Frequent Meals is an Effective Strategy for Brain Health

Fact:

Eating continuously throughout the day and night is a sure path to cognitive decline. Eating in shortened intervals of time can enhance cognitive function. An overnight fast of 12 hours or longer can improve your brain function.



Taking Action on the Facts

You've dived into the information; now it's time for action. Cognitive decline is not inevitable; your lifestyle affects how well your brain functions, regardless of age. The first step is awareness, and you've got that covered. It's time to implement real change, using evidence-based practices like Intermittent Fasting or Time-Restricted Eating, sleep hygiene, and stress management.

Take Action and Choose One Area to Change

It can be overwhelming to tackle everything at the same time. Instead, focus on one aspect that's most impactful for you right now, be it food, sleep, or stress management. For instance, if you're having trouble remembering new information, consider looking into Intermittent Fasting or Time-Restricted Eating, as these strategies are linked with improved brain function. Make that your starting point, and allow yourself the grace to work on other areas later.

Create a Tiny Habit to Improve Your Brain Health Today

According to BJ Fogg's Tiny Habit Method, the key to effective change is to make it easy. Start with a behavior that's so "Tiny" you'll do it even when you lack motivation. Anchor this new tiny habit to an existing routine, such as making your morning coffee, to create a prompt. Lastly, celebrate your new behavior and create a positive emotion.

What If a Healthier Brain Could Start with Just One Tiny Habit Today?

- After I accept a phone call, I will start walking as I talk.
- After I put back my toothbrush in the holder, I will take my magnesium supplements.
- After I sit on my bed at night, I will put on my sleep mask and ear plugs.



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Let's Take the Next Step.

For now, the next best thing to do is subscribe to my podcast, The Brain Podcast, with Dr. Shabnam Das Kar, MD and Andrea Spyros. It's a transformative journey towards unparalleled cognitive health with science-based, actionable strategies to elevate mental clarity, focus, and overall brain function.

Whether your goal is to boost your productivity, clear brain fog, or lay a strong foundation for a dementia-resistant future, "The Brain Podcast" is your guide to consistent and effective implementation. Join us and begin your journey to cognitive excellence.

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