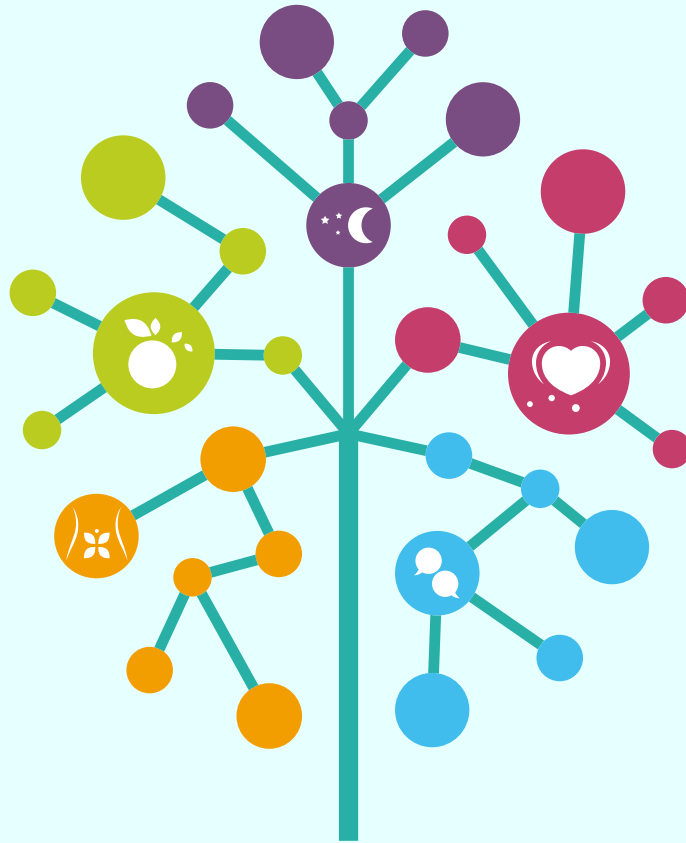


“Little things you do every day can help ensure your brain is fit and healthy - and it’s never too late to start, says ageing expert Professor James Goodwin”. - New Scientist



# The Brain Health Method: The Power of Six

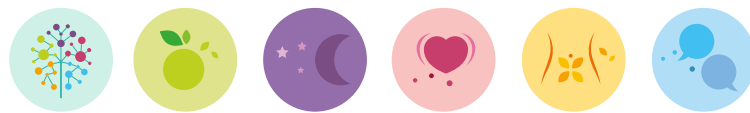
Six guiding pillars to follow, helping you to stay sharp, feel good and reduce the risk of neurodegeneration.



BRAIN ● HEALTH  
NETWORK  
[www.brain.health](http://www.brain.health)

# The Brain Health Method: The Power of Six

Six guiding pillars to follow, helping you to stay sharp, feel good and reduce the risk of neurodegeneration.



**It's not often that people think about the physiological health of their brain - and it's easy to think there's nothing you can do to keep your brain healthy as you get older. But in fact, there are lots of small changes you can make that will keep you sharp and help you feel good, too.**

Even something as seemingly simple – and enjoyable – as spending time with your friends and family could make a real difference.

For, while it is easy to think of dementia as an inevitable consequence of getting older, it is anything but.

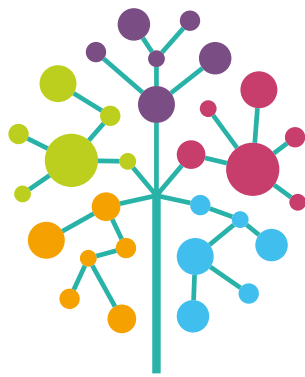
At **Brain Health Network**, we are on a mission to raise awareness of brain health - to help people stay sharp, feel good and lower their risk of developing neurodegenerative diseases (which are not an inevitable part of ageing).

We work with some of the world's leading researchers and academics in this field to provide you with the latest information on brain health. In doing so, we have identified six pillars covering all areas from nutrition, sleep, the gut-brain axis, exercise, keeping an active mind and living a healthy life. Designed to fit into daily living, together they form 'The Brain Health Method – The Power of Six'. Spending a little time on each every day could help keep your brain sharper for longer.

Read on to find out more about the six simple things you can do each day to maintain your brain and download our chart and use it each evening to record the changes you have made and track your progress.

It is never too late – or too early – to start looking after your brain health. Even small changes could make big difference. So, why not start today?

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- 5. Gut Health**  
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Active mind, healthy brain

# Healthy life



Evidence is mounting that a **healthy lifestyle** can help you stay sharper for longer, and keep dementia at bay.



In fact, a pivotal paper from the Lancet Commission on dementia in 2020 identified 12 lifestyle and environmental factors, from obesity and high blood pressure to air pollution and hearing loss, which together may be responsible for 40% of cases of dementia.

Simply put, the University College London-led review found that nearly half of all cases could potentially be prevented or delayed.

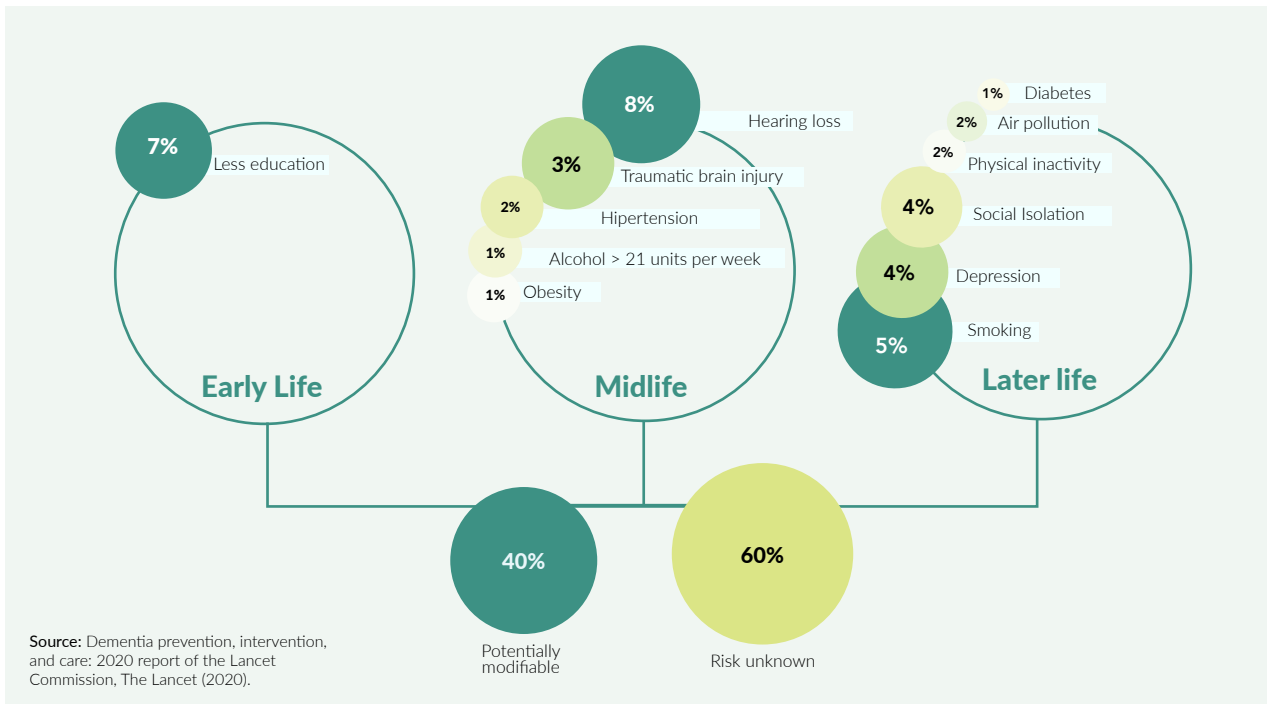
Excitingly, a 2019 study also shows that healthy habits reduce the chance of developing dementia, even in those whose genes put them at high risk.

The Exeter University research found that those who were genetically predisposed to dementia but had a healthy lifestyle were almost a third less likely to develop the condition than those with similar genes but an unhealthy lifestyle.

The researchers said the tantalising result ‘undermines the fatalistic view of dementia’ – meaning your lifestyle can make a real difference, whatever your genes.

**A 2019 study shows that healthy habits reduce the chance of developing dementia, even in those whose genes put them at high risk.**

## Risk factors for dementia



## DID YOU KNOW

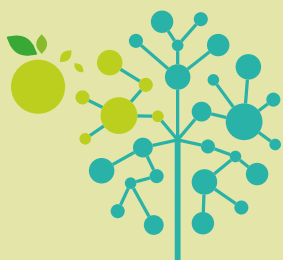
**1** A study found that memory and attention improved when overweight men and women lost 2kg (4.4lb) or more.

**2** 1 in 50 of all cases of dementia is due to lack of exercise, the Lancet Commission has calculated.

**3** Men aged 60-plus who gave up smoking for at least four years were 10% less likely to develop dementia than those who didn't quit the habit, a study found.

**4** While simple changes to our lifestyle won't delay, prevent or cure all cases of dementia, even delaying its onset by five years could halve the number of people with the condition.

# Nutrition



Eat your way to a  
**healthier brain.**

# 2

**Y**ou are what you eat, so the saying goes, and your brain health is no exception. In fact, of all the lifestyle factors that affect our brain health, the food we eat is the one we have the most control over.

The right foods fuel our brain cells and make them more efficient

at transmitting information and at making new connections between brain areas, which helps with memory and learning. The right diet can also help reduce potentially harmful inflammation.

For optimal brain health, we need to regularly consume healthy fats, sufficient amounts of certain vitamins and minerals, including

vitamins B, C, D and E, and also compounds derived from plants called polyphenols.

Individually, each of these three components will have a beneficial effect. But they may also work together to provide even greater brain benefits.

## The best foods to nourish your brain

When feeding the brain, and ourselves, the Global Council on Brain Health (GCBH), an independent panel of scientists, doctors, academics and policy experts which provides trusted information on how to maintain and improve brain health, suggests we divide food into **three groups**:

## FOODS TO...



### Be eaten regularly

- Berries
- Fresh vegetables, especially leafy greens
- Fish & seafood
- Healthy fats, including extra virgin olive oil
- Nuts



### Include in your diet

- Beans, pulse and legumes
- Fruits in addition to berries
- Poultry
- Whole grains



### To eat in limited amounts

- Fried food, pastries and processed food
- Red meat and products such as bacon, sausages and burgers
- Whole-fat dairy products such as cheese and butter
- Salt

## DID YOU KNOW

**1** Over-50s who said they ate well at least five days a week were almost twice as likely to rate their brain health and mental sharpness as 'excellent' or 'very good' than those who rarely or never ate well, a study found.

**2** Try to eat fish at least twice a week but choose varieties that are low in mercury, such as salmon, cod and tuna – and ensure at least one portion is of oily fish.

**3** The brain makes up just 2% of your body weight but accounts for 20% of your body's energy use.

**4** Nuts are an excellent source of protein and healthy fats. But they're also high in calories, so limit yourself to a handful a day.



# Sleep



The dream prescription.

# 3

**F**ar from being too good to be true, getting a good night's sleep could be the dream prescription for a healthier body and brain.

In fact, scientists say it is time more of us woke up to the benefits of sleep.

A wealth of research shows that sleep – and how much or how little of it we get – affects our health in all sorts of ways, including our risk of heart disease and diabetes.

***In fact, scientists say it is time more of us woke up to the benefits of sleep.***

Given the benefits of sleep for the body, it is perhaps no surprise that sleep also appears to be good for brain health.

One study concluded that there are possible links between 15% of Alzheimer's cases and poor sleep. Another, of people aged 65 and above, found those who slept poorly were 50% more likely to

suffer significant cognitive decline in the next few years.

In some instances, the difference in decline between the good and poor sleepers was equivalent to five years of ageing.

Sleep is believed to be key to the formation, storage and retrieval of memories and to the clearing out of toxins that have built up in the brain. This includes beta-amyloid, a sticky protein that is a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease. Research suggests that even one sleepless night increases the build-up of this protein.

## How to get better sleep

### Daytime

- Get up at the same time every day. Expose yourself to light during the day.
- Exercise regularly.
- Lose weight (if you are overweight).
- Avoid caffeine after lunch.
- Don't worry too much about the occasional night of bad sleep.

### Evening

- Restrict food and fluids from three hours before going to bed.
- Listen to your body. If you have trouble sleeping at night but doze off in the evening (e.g. when watching TV), go to bed earlier or stand up and move around to make yourself more alert.

### Night

- Only go to bed when you feel drowsy enough to fall asleep.
- Maintain a regular bedtime routine.
- Keep your bedroom quiet and dark and at a comfortable temperature at night.

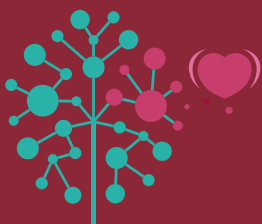
## DID YOU KNOW

**1** It is important to note that it hasn't been definitively proven that poor sleep raises the odds of dementia – it is also possible that those in the early stages of the disease simply sleep more poorly. Regardless, experts agree that sleeping properly is fundamental to good health.



[Click here for more tips on how to start sleeping better.](#)

# Exercise



Why the **benefits** of exercise are worth bottling.

# 4

It's often said that if the benefits of exercise could be bottled, we would have the magic health pill the world has been waiting for.

And when it comes to brain health, the rewards are no less profound. An abundance of scientific research has shown that greater amounts of physical activity are associated with a reduced risk of dementia in later life.

If strenuous exercise seems daunting or even impossible, take heart, because while there's evidence that more vigorous your activity, the bigger the benefit to your brain health, even just being more active in everyday life can make a significant difference, too. Importantly, it's never too late to reap the brain benefits of being physically active. In fact, evidence indicates that people who lead inactive or sedentary lifestyles stand to benefit more from an

increase in physical activity than those who are already physically active and take up a new exercise regimen.

**Greater amounts of physical activity are associated with a reduced risk of dementia in later life.**

## How to move more

To maintain and improve brain health, the GCBH recommends we do organised (or purposeful) exercise AND try to be active in our day-to-day lives.



### An active lifestyle

- Walk where you can instead of driving.
- Take the stairs instead of the lift.
- Park further away from your destination.
- Engage in hobbies and sports such as active yoga, dancing and gardening.



### Purposeful exercise

- 150 minutes of weekly, moderate-intensity aerobic activity such as brisk walking or doubles tennis (or 75 minutes of vigorous activity, such as running or swimming laps).
- Two or more days a week of moderate-intensity muscle-strengthening activities, such as free weights, squats and lunges.

## DID YOU KNOW

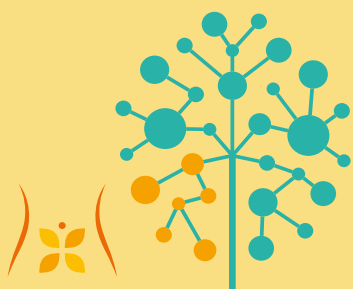
**1** One large review concluded that being particularly active reduced the risk of developing all types of dementia by 28% – and Alzheimer's disease by 45%.

**2** Physical activity increases levels of a substance called brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF). Dubbed 'Miracle-Gro' for the brain, BDNF improves how well brain cells function, encourages new ones to grow and also protects them from stress and death.

**3** As your heart rate increases during exercise, so too does blood flow to the brain. As a result, your brain is exposed to more oxygen and nutrients.



# Gut Health



A gutsy route to a  
**healthy brain.**

# 5

**G**ut bacteria and gut health are phrases we're hearing more and more. That's because scientific research increasingly suggests the balance of 'good' bacteria and 'bad' bacteria in our gut is key to our overall health – including our risk of developing dementia later in life.

For years, it was thought that dementia was caused by clumps (plaques) of protein building up in the brain.

Now, some research suggests that these plaques may occur naturally – and that gut problems may increase their quantity.

This means that the presence of good bacteria and healthy communication between the gut and the brain may

protect against plaque overload – and dementia.

One problem is that our balance of 'good' bacteria can fall as we age, due to everything from the medication we are taking, to constipation, illness and changes in our diet.

Studies have, however, suggested that changing the make-up of our gut bacteria, through diet, probiotics or prebiotics, can lead to positive changes in brain function, including changes associated with learning and memory.

Two of most beneficial bacteria for the gut are Lactobacilli and Bifidobacteria. These are the mainstays of probiotic supplements and are found in some foods. Prebiotics, foods that support the growth of these 'good' bacteria, may have even more benefits.

**Two of most beneficial bacteria for the gut are Lactobacilli and Bifidobacteria.**



### Foods rich in prebiotic fibre include:

Artichokes  
Bananas  
Asparagus  
Barley  
Chicory coffee  
Black pepper  
Dark chocolate  
Beetroot  
Fennel root  
Broccoli  
Endives  
Jerusalem artichokes  
Mustard greens  
Ginger  
Onions  
Garlic  
Tomatoes  
Jicama  
Yacón  
Leeks and legumes  
Bamboo shoots



### Foods bursting with "good" bacteria include:

- Fermented vegetables such as pickles, kimchi and sauerkraut
- Fermented soy foods, including miso, tamari and tempeh
- Fermented dairy products such as kefir and yoghurt

## How the brain and the gut "talk" to each other

**1** One of the most important scientific discoveries of recent years was that gut bacteria play a crucial role in communication between the gut and the brain.

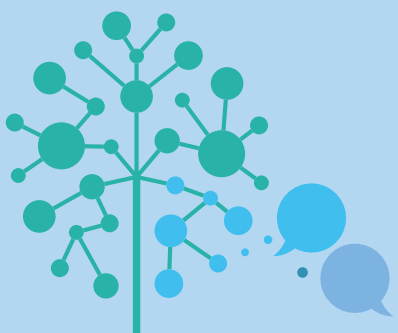
The gut and brain 'talk' to each other via the enteric nervous system – millions of nerve cells that are

embedded in the gut wall – and the vagus nerve, which runs between the brain and gut. The healthier and more diverse the bacteria in our gut are, the better this gut-brain communication pathway works.

[Click here for more information on how to look after your 'good' bacteria](#)



# Active Mind



Active mind  
**healthy brain.**

6

**F**rom Sudoku to socialising, we've all heard that keeping the mind active can be good for our brain health.

But knowing just what to do to keep the mind sharp can be a bit of a puzzle.

We've examined the potential benefits of socialising and of hobbies and activities from crosswords to mindful meditation and spoken to the experts to find out what they recommend – and why.

### Social Activity

Humans have a fundamental need to interact with others and evidence is mounting that social engagement may help people maintain their mental fitness.

A 2019 study from the UK provides the strongest evidence to date that social contact earlier in life plays a role in staving off dementia.

Data on more 10,000 adults whose health had been tracked for an average of 28 years revealed that those who were socially active when they were 60 were less likely to go on to develop dementia. Strikingly, someone who saw friends almost daily was 12% less likely to develop dementia than someone who only saw one or two friends every few months.

### Mental activities

There is increasing evidence that taking part in cognitively stimulating activities, from learning to play a musical instrument to juggling, may help lower the risk of dementia and age-related cognitive impairment.

**Those who were socially active when they were 60 were less likely to go on to develop dementia.**

And, contrary to the popular saying that 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks', you can learn things at any age. The sooner you start, however, the better.

Interestingly, there isn't a 'magic bullet' – one activity that has been shown to be better than others for keeping the brain healthy – and so experts advise doing the things you like to do. Also, the activities don't need to be intellectual – dancing, gardening and Bikram yoga all fit the bill.



### Top tips for staying socially active include:

- Focus on the friendships and relationships or activities you enjoy the most.
- Maintain contact with people of different ages, including younger people.
- If you find socialising difficult, start small by sharing a smile a day with someone or showing an interest in someone by asking how they are.



### Examples include:

- Cooking
- Gardening
- Socialising with friends
- Learning an instrument
- Meditation



## The beauty of keeping your brain busy

**S**cientists have several theories about why keeping the brain busy may also keep it healthy. The main one revolves around something called cognitive reserve.

This is the idea that the things we experience throughout our lives, including our education, jobs and

hobbies, rewire and reshape the brain – a phenomenon called neuroplasticity. These constant changes to the brain are believed to make it more resilient to decline and disease.

Two people can have the similar amounts of beta-amyloid, the sticky brain protein that is a hallmark of Alzheimer's, but the

one that has built up a high cognitive reserve over their life is less likely to develop dementia than the other.

It is important to note, however, that cognitive reserve is built up over the course of your life, meaning it isn't solely determined by your education or job and can still be boosted later in life.

[Click here to find out more about how to keep your brain busy.](#)



# The potential is huge

## We're here to help you keep your brain healthy

As you can see, it really is never too late (or too early) to start looking after your brain health. To echo the words of the 28 world-leading dementia experts of the Lancet Commission on dementia, while it can be hard for us to change our behaviour, the potential for each of us to stay sharper for longer, feel good, and lower our risk of dementia is huge.

### Why wait? Make a start today

At Brain Health Network, we help people keep their brain healthy as they age.

We're working with researchers and academics at leading universities around the world to learn more about the latest work they're doing on brain health.

We help explain their findings and recommendations in a clear and understandable way, so you don't have to read through any academic journals (but you'll still be able to find the source material, if you're interested).

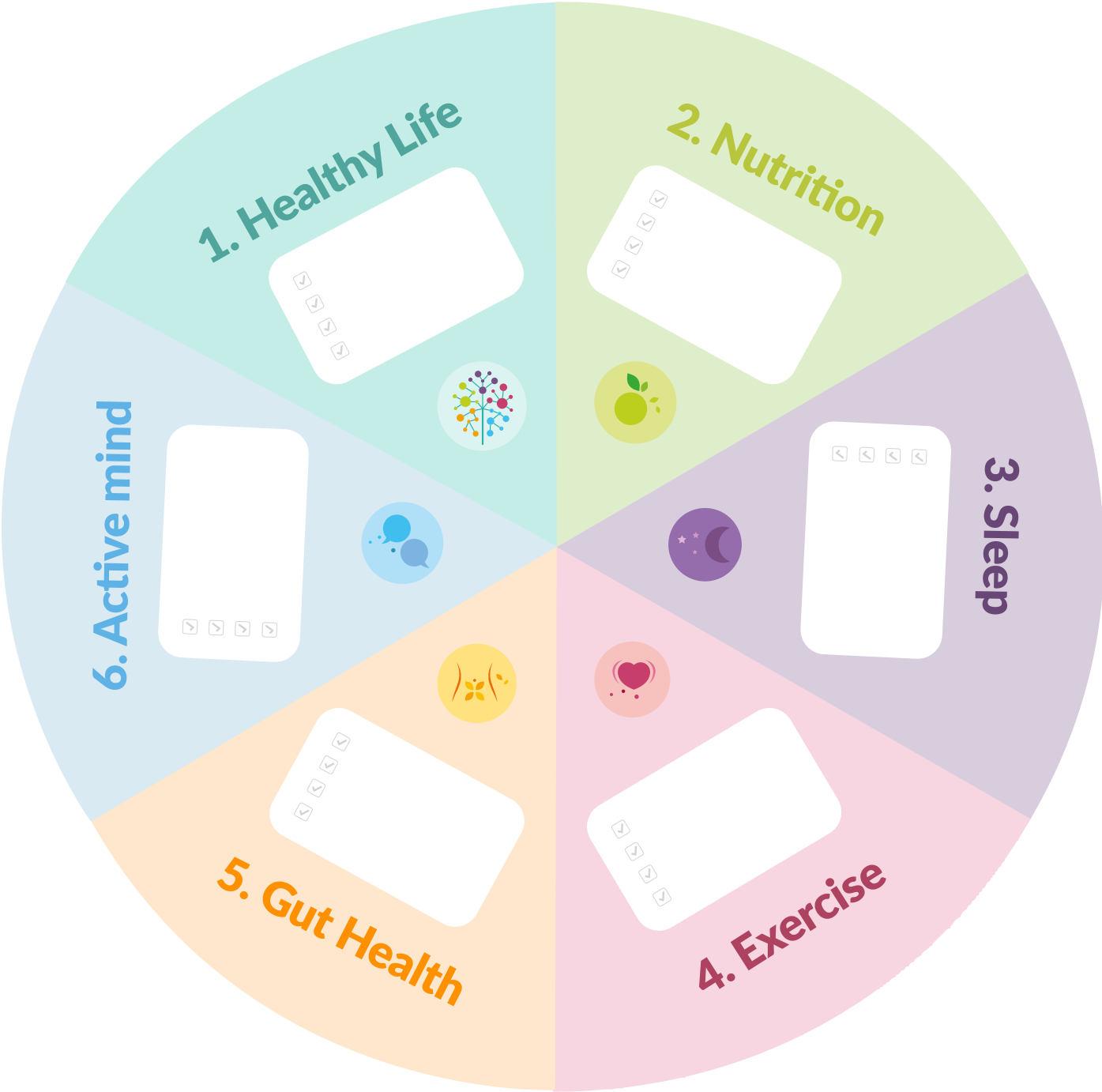
Helping people understand how to look after their brain, and put the recommendations into practice in the most sustainable way possible, is at the core of our mission.

**You can find lots more information on the research mentioned here, including the references, as well as details of our scientific advisory group at [www.brain.health](http://www.brain.health)**

**[Follow us on instagram @brainhealthnetwork](https://www.instagram.com/brainhealthnetwork)**

# The Power of Six:

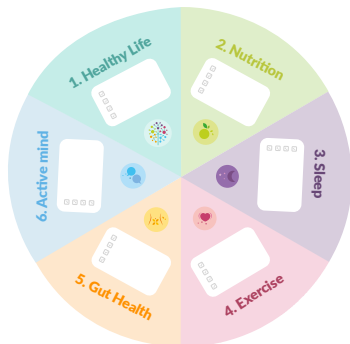
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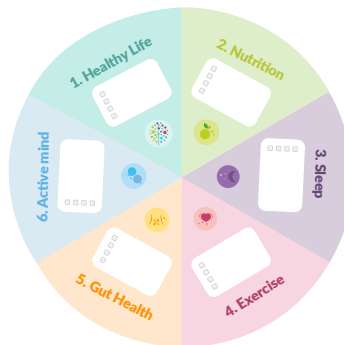
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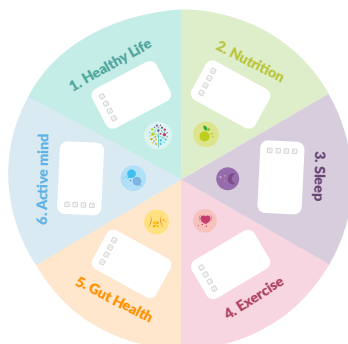
## Monday



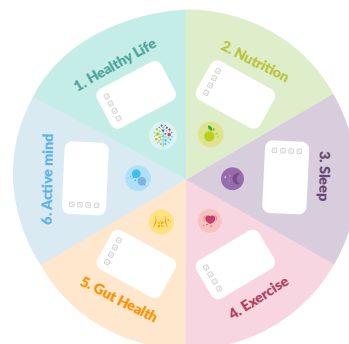
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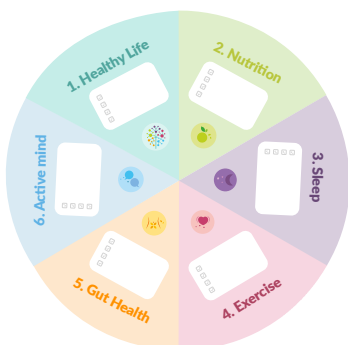
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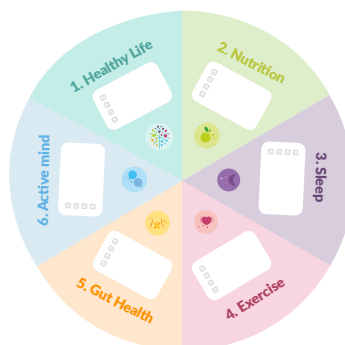
## Thursday



## Friday



## Saturday



## Sunday

