TO YOUR HEALTH

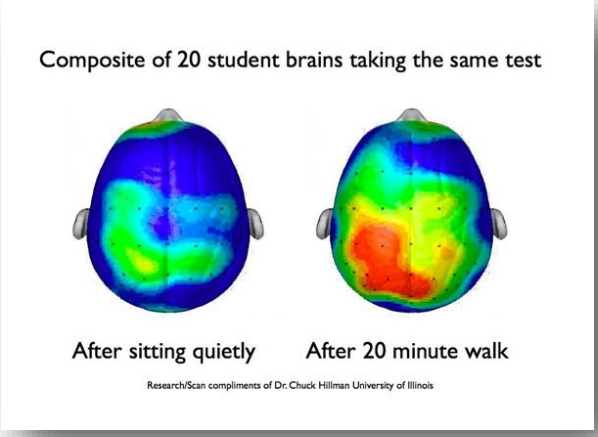
Volume 31, Number 10 October, 2026

Move Your Body, Support Your Brain

By Karen Roy, Fitness and Aquatics Director, and the Fitness Staff

When we think about exercise, we often think about stronger muscles, a healthier heart, or better balance. There is another important part of our health that physical activity may also benefit: ***our brains.*** Not only is exercise good for your muscles and bones, but it can also keep your brain healthy, too. **Physical activity can improve your cognitive health**—helping you think, learn, problem-solve, and enjoy an emotional balance. It can improve memory and reduce anxiety or depression. Our cognitive abilities help us do many things we value every day, such as remembering appointments, following directions, solving problems, having conversations, and managing our daily routines.

Source: Journal of Alzheimer's Disease—Physical activity, sedentary behavior, and cognitive function in older adults

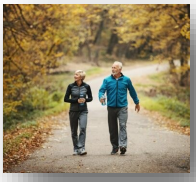


A study from the University of Wisconsin, led by Dr. Ozioma Okonkwo found that moderate activity increases metabolism in the regions of the brain designed for learning and memory. The study recruited cognitively normal, late middle aged participants (average age of 64) to wear an accelerometer for seven consecutive days to measure activity. The results found that the more time spent in moderate activity, the greater the glucose metabolism in the brain. Moderate activity is considered a brisk walk, water aerobics or dancing.

Here are 5 tips to encourage you to move your body and support your brain.

1. MOVE MORE, SIT LESS

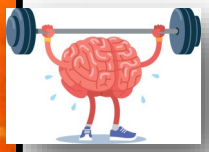
Long periods of uninterrupted sitting have been associated with significant declines in cognitive performance in older adults. Research suggests that breaking up sedentary time with light physical activity may reduce the severity of decline some cognitive functions experienced. Look for simple opportunities to break up your sedentary time:



- Take a short walk around the building, hallway, or common area.
- Stand up and stretch between activities.
- Walk to visit a friend instead of calling.
- Get up during television breaks.

2. KEEP YOUR BODY STRONG

To be able to maintain our independence as we continue to get older, we must maintain (or even improve) the strength of our muscles. Having stronger muscles can help us do our everyday tasks and activities like getting up from a chair, carrying belongings, climbing stairs, and generally being able to move around without fear of falling. Research on exercise in older adults also suggests that physical activity can support cognitive function! This means that strength training isn't just about our muscles, it is one piece of an overall active lifestyle that supports our brain and body. We suggest you include some form of resistance exercise in your routine.



3. CHALLENGE YOUR BRAIN WHILE YOU MOVE

Contrary to popular belief, our brains don't work separately from the rest of our bodies. Many physical activities also have some

cognitively challenging aspects, such as having to pay attention, remember instructions, coordinate movements, make decisions, and react to what's happening around us.

Participating in activities that combine physical movement with mental engagement can provide an opportunity to exercise both the body and the brain.

4. KEEP WORKING ON YOUR BALANCE

Balance is one of the most important parts of maintaining independence. Having the ability to stand, turn, step, and move safely allows us to participate in the activities we enjoy without worrying about the risk of falling.

Balance exercises also require the brain and body to communicate with one another. Your brain has to process information about where your body is in space and help you respond to changes in your environment.

When practicing balance, always choose exercises that are appropriate for your body and ALWAYS have support nearby (counter-tops, chairs, tables, etc.)

5. MAKE MOVEMENT A REGULAR PART OF YOUR LIFE

You don't have to complete the "perfect" workout to support your health. The most important thing is finding physical activities that you can safely perform and enjoy doing regularly. Research has found benefits associated with different types and amounts of exercise. Choose activities you enjoy. You're more likely to keep doing something when it feels like a part of your lifestyle rather than a chore.

Source: Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience — Physical activity and cognitive training in older adults.

UPCOMING FITNESS SPECIALS!

SQUARE DANCING—OCT. 3rd, 2-4 PM

ACTIVE AGING WEEK—OCT. 5-9

SPEAK TO A FITNESS SPECIALIST FOR MORE INFORMATION

Welcome Dr. Sarah Jacobs

We are pleased to welcome Dr. Sarah Jacobs to our Carleton-Willard Village medical team. Dr. Jacobs received her degree from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in Philadelphia, PA. She recently relocated to Massachusetts and brings extensive experience in primary care, post-acute and long-term care, rehabilitation medicine, and hospital medicine. Most recently, she practiced at Geisinger Medical Center in Pennsylvania, where she cared for patients across post-acute, long term care, assisted living, and hospital settings. She also served as Medical Director at two skilled nursing facilities. She will be seeing residents in the clinic in the near future.

Vaccine Clinic—Tuesday, October 6 9:00am —12:00pm in the Auditorium

- If you received a vaccine outside of CWV, please bring documentation to the Clinic.
- Jitney transportation will be provided for **ALL** Cottage Residents. No cars please as parking is limited and the schedule is without wiggle room.
- Badger and Winthrop Terrace Residents should arrive at your scheduled time.
- Resident vaccines will be administered in the Auditorium.
- Please wear appropriate clothing so your upper arm is easily accessible.
- A jitney will be available at the Main Street entrance if you need transportation home afterwards.
- Llewsac Lodge Residents will receive their vaccines on the unit.

Open Enrollment

Maeve Lobo, LICSW will be providing open enrollment sessions in October by appointment ONLY. She will be here on October 5th and 12th from 10a-3pm. If anyone is interested in meeting with Maeve for insurance open enrollment, please notify the clinic to schedule an appointment.