



BRAIN BOOST



The brain is a very important organ in the human body. Without our brains, nothing else can function. Scientists and others are learning more all the time about how our brains grow and develop, and how we can best care for them. There is a lot of agreement, however, about some fundamental important things.

1. Nutrition: Brains need lots of fuel. A balanced diet that includes lots of whole foods rich in vitamins and minerals, healthy fats and proteins is your best bet.
2. Sleep: Children and teenagers need more sleep than adults do. Some general guidelines are:
 - a. ages 3 to 10: 10 to 12 hours each day
 - b. ages 11 to 12: about 10 hours each day
 - c. teenagers (ages 13 to 17): about nine hours each day.
3. Stimulating thinking activities: People of all ages need to use their brains in lots of different ways to keep them sharp and effective.
4. Physical activities: Playing sports, free play, running, hiking, jumping, skipping...all of this and more promote healthy brain development.
5. Mindfulness/relaxation/rest: Even little kids can get worried and stressed out. Everyone needs to find ways to quiet and calm their minds. Learn more by visiting healthpoweredkids.org or changetochill.org.
6. Protection: Our brains are actually pretty soft and they can be sensitive. Sometimes when we're doing more rough activities, like biking, skiing, or skateboarding, it's good to have even more protection than usual.

AT HOME ACTIVITY

Does everyone in your family have a good working helmet for biking, skiing, roller blading and other activities? Do an inventory. If you discover you need one or more additional helmets in your household you can buy them at sporting goods stores or sometimes local hospitals or health clinics will have them available for free or at a reduced-charge.



GUIDED IMAGERY

Guided imagery can help you relax and feel less stressed. Try a simple guided imagery exercise with these easy steps:

1. Get into a comfortable position. If lying down would likely put you to sleep, choose somewhere comfortable to sit.
2. Begin breathing deeply and close your eyes, focusing on breathing in calm and breathing out stress.
3. Once you get to a relaxed state, begin to envision yourself in the midst of the most relaxing environment you can imagine.
4. As you imagine your scene, try to involve all of your senses. What does it look like? How does it feel? What smells and even tastes do you notice? What do you hear?
5. Enjoy your surroundings, and let yourself be far from what stresses you for as long as you like. When you're ready to return to reality, count back from 10 or 20, and tell yourself that when you get back to one, you'll feel serene and alert, and enjoy the rest of your day.