

LIVE WELL WORK WELL

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How Team Sports Change a Child's Brain

Adult depression has long been associated with shrinkage of the hippocampus, a brain region that plays an important role in memory and response to stress. Now, new research from Washington University in St. Louis has linked participation in team sports to larger hippocampal volumes in children and less depression in boys ages 9 to 11.

"Our findings are important because they help illuminate the relationships between involvement in sports, volume of a particular brain region and depressive symptoms in kids as young as nine," said Lisa Gorham, lead author of the study and a senior majoring in cognitive neuroscience in Arts & Sciences. Additional co-authors include Terry Jernigan, a neuropsychologist at University of California, San Diego; and Jim Hudziak, chief of child psychiatry at the University of Vermont.

"We found that involvement in sports, but not non-sport activities such as music or art, is related to greater hippocampal volume in both boys and girls, and is related to reduced depression in boys," Gorham said.

These relationships were particularly strong for children participating in sports that involved structure, such as a school team, a non-school league, or regular lessons, as compared to more informal engagement in sports, according to the study, which is forthcoming in the journal *Biological Psychiatry: Cognitive Neuroscience and Neuroimaging*.

Washington University in St. Louis. "How team sports change a child's brain: Team sports associated with less depression in boys as young as 9." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/03/190321135154.htm (accessed April 16, 2019).

It's important to note, wrote Barch and Gorham, that these results are correlational, not causal. It could be that participating in sports leads to increased hippocampal volume and decreased depression, or it could be that children who are more depressed are less likely to engage in sports and also have smaller hippocampal volume. Either scenario could have important implications for understanding childhood depression.

"The fact that these relationships were strongest for team or structured sports suggests that there might be something about the combination of exercise and the social support or structure that comes from being on a team that can be useful at preventing or treating depression in young people," Gorham said. "The findings raise intriguing possibilities for new work on preventing and treating depression in children."



Eye Health 101

Foods to Boost Eye Health



Broccoli



Salmon



Squash



Eggs



Sunflower Seeds



Lean meat & poultry



Red bell peppers



Brussels sprouts



Sweet potatoes



Dark, leafy greens

Keeping your eyes healthy is a very important task. Fortunately, it's also an easy thing to do. Here are five simple ways you can keep your eyes healthy:

- 1. Get a regular exam.** Complete eye exams consist of a series of tests designed to evaluate your vision and check for eye diseases.
- 2. Wear protective eyewear.** When you're playing sports or doing a task that requires eyewear to be worn, wear glasses or goggles to prevent injury to your eyes.
- 3. Don't smoke.** Smoking can contribute to a host of irreversible eye diseases, so quit or refrain from smoking to protect your eyes.
- 4. Put your shades on.** Wearing sunglasses protects your eyes from the sun's harmful rays. Don't forget to put them on when you're outside!
- 5. Give your eyes a break.** Staring at a computer screen for too long can cause a painful strain on your eyes. Whenever possible, try giving yourself a short break from looking at the screen.

Flu and Flu-Like Illnesses Linked to Increased Risk of Stroke

Flu-like illnesses are linked to an increased risk of stroke and neck artery dissections, according to two preliminary research studies to be presented in Honolulu at the American Stroke Association's International Stroke Conference 2019, a world premier meeting for researchers and clinicians dedicated to the science and treatment of cerebrovascular disease.

In the first study, researchers found that having a flu-like illness increased the odds of having a stroke by nearly 40% over the next 15 days. This increased risk remained up to one year.

There are many proposed mechanisms behind the flu-stroke link, but no definitive reason has been described to explain the association. Researchers suspect it could be due to inflammation caused by the infection.

In a second study from the same institution, researchers found an increased risk of tearing neck arteries within one month of battling a flu-like illness. Non-traumatic cervical artery dissection is a leading cause of ischemic stroke in patients 15- to 45-years old.

Patients were more likely to suffer a flu-like illness within 30 days prior to cervical artery dissection compared to the same time one and two years before.

"Our results suggest that the risk of dissection fades over time after the flu. This trend indicates that flu-like illnesses may indeed trigger dissection," said Madeleine Hunter, B.A., the study's lead author and a second-year medical student at Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University in New York City.

American Heart Association. "Flu, flu-like illnesses linked to increased risk of stroke, neck artery tears." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/01/190130075757.htm (accessed April 16, 2019).

5 Things You Can Do to Improve Your Mental Health

Mental health plays a huge role in your overall health and well-being. It affects everything, including how we think, feel, and act, and helps determine how we make healthy choices and cope with stress.

Because it's such a crucial component of your health, it's important to focus on maintaining, or even improving, your mental health. Here are five simple ways to work on your mental health every day:

- 1. Express gratitude.** Taking five minutes a day to write down the things that you are grateful for has been proven to lower stress levels and can help you change your mindset from negative to positive.
- 2. Get exercise.** You probably hear all the time how beneficial exercise is to your overall health, and it's true. Exercising regularly can benefit your brain function, reduce anxiety, and improve your self-image.

3. Spend time outdoors. Getting outside, especially when it's sunny, can greatly improve your mood and benefit your mental health.

4. Be kind. Helping others and being kind not only helps the receiver of the act, but can also help you. It can even be something small; holding the door or giving a compliment can go a long way.

5. Get a good night's sleep. Fatigued individuals typically experience drowsiness, mood changes, loss of energy and appetite, headaches, and a lack of motivation, concentration, and alertness. Strive for seven to eight hours of sleep a night to improve your mental health.

May Recipe Banana Bran Muffins

- 2 large bananas, mashed
- 1 cup skim milk
- 1 egg white
- 2 Tbsp. light margarine
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 cup All Bran or Fiber One Original
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 6 packets Splenda
- 1½ tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ cup raspberries (optional)



Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Generously spray paper muffin cups with Pam. Combine bananas, skim milk, egg white, margarine, vanilla, and All Bran in a bowl. Let sit for at least 5 minutes or longer to further soften the cereal. Mix together all other ingredients except raspberries in a separate bowl. After letting All Bran mixture sit, mix together with dry ingredients. Fold in raspberries and spoon the mixture into muffin cups. Bake for 25–30 minutes or until toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Yield: 6 servings. Each serving provides: Calories- 180, Carbs- 42 g., Protein- 7 g., Fat- 2g.

Source: <http://staylean.blogspot.com/2009/09/banana-bran-muffins.html>

This is for informational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice. For further information, please consult a medical professional.

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