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# KEEPING YOUR BRAIN SHARP ISN'T ABOUT WORKING MORE PUZZLES

By Laura Williamson, American Heart Association News  
January, 21, 2021



- Mental decline is one of the most feared aspects of growing older. People will do just about anything to prevent it, from swallowing supplements touted as memory boosters to spending hours solving Sudoku and crossword puzzles.
- But do these things really keep the aging brain sharp? The short answer is, not really.
- “It can certainly help you concentrate if you spend an hour or two doing puzzles,” said Dr. Vladimir Hachinski, a Canadian neurologist and global expert in the field of brain health. “It’s good because you’re exercising your brain. But don’t expect too much from it.”
- Research suggests there are indeed ways to prevent or delay many types of cognitive loss, but they don’t involve fish oil supplements or brain teasers. Instead, Hachinski and others in the field agree, people who want to preserve good brain function should take the same steps they would to protect their hearts.
- “If you have a good heart, you have a good brain,” said Dr. Rong Zhang, professor of neurology at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. “Whatever risk factors that are bad for your heart, such as high blood pressure, smoking, obesity or a lack of physical activity, these things are also bad for your brain.”
- The link between heart health and brain health is well established.
- The American Heart Association and an expert-led Lancet Commission advise people to focus on their risk factors for heart disease and stroke. These include lowering blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels; getting enough sleep; not smoking; limiting alcohol intake; eating a healthy diet; exercising at least 150 minutes per week; maintaining a healthy weight; and staying socially active. The Lancet Commission recently expanded its list of dementia risk factors to also include head injuries in mid-life and exposure to air pollution.
- *To read the full article go to [Keeping your brain sharp isn't about working more puzzles | American Heart Association](#)*

Not only is February American Heart Month, we also celebrate Valentine's Day – a chance to show our loved ones that we care about them. Check out the following recipe to share with those you love for an easy healthy meal!

## Sheet-Pan Salmon with Sweet Potatoes & Broccoli

Sara Haas, RDN, LDN  
Source: Diabetic Living Magazine



### Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons low-fat mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 4 teaspoons olive oil, divided
- ½ teaspoon salt, divided
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper, divided
- 4 cups broccoli florets (8 oz.; 1 medium crown)
- 1 ¼ pounds salmon fillet, cut into 4 portions
- 2 limes, 1 zested and juiced, 1 cut into wedges for serving
- ¼ cup crumbled feta or cotija cheese
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro



### Directions

Preheat oven to 425 ° F. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with foil and coat with cooking spray.

Combine mayonnaise and chili powder in a small bowl. Set aside.

Toss sweet potatoes with 2 tsp. oil, 1/4 tsp. salt, and 1/8 tsp. pepper in a medium bowl. Spread on the prepared baking sheet. Roast for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, toss broccoli with the remaining 2 tsp. oil, 1/4 tsp. salt, and 1/8 tsp. pepper in the same bowl.

Remove the baking sheet from oven. Stir the sweet potatoes and move them to the sides of the pan. Arrange salmon in the center of the pan and spread the broccoli on either side, among the sweet potatoes. Spread 2 Tbsp. of the mayonnaise mixture over the salmon. Bake until the sweet potatoes are tender and the salmon flakes easily with a fork, about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, add lime zest and lime juice to the remaining 1 Tbsp. mayonnaise; mix well.

Divide the salmon among 4 plates and top with cheese and cilantro. Divide the sweet potatoes and broccoli among the plates and drizzle with the lime-mayonnaise sauce. Serve with lime wedges and any remaining sauce.