

# Understanding Cognitive Aging

## What is Cognitive Aging?

Cognitive aging, also known as brain aging, is part of the natural aging process, and may include some changes in the ability to think, learn and remember.



Nearly **1/3 of Americans** surveyed by the McKnight Brain Research Foundation feel uninformed about normal cognitive aging.<sup>1</sup>

## Fear of the Unknown

While age-related memory loss is typically a normal part of growing older, many people translate their lack of knowledge about cognitive aging into fear.

**87% of Americans** are concerned about age-related memory loss and decline in brain function as they grow older.

Many Americans are afraid of specific conditions that may affect the brain:



**66%** are concerned about memory



**59%** are concerned about dementia



**44%** are concerned about mental health

The McKnight Brain Research Foundation's Brain Works: Optimize Your Brain Span campaign aims to educate the public on what cognitive aging is as the first step to alleviating fear and empowering everyone to take action to promote healthy brain aging.

## The Brain / Body Connection

Simple lifestyle changes – many of the same behaviors that are recommended for overall health—can also help preserve brain health with age.

While only 32% of the MBRF survey respondents said they believe they can take action to help control their brain health as they age, research suggests adopting a combination of the following healthy behaviors can benefit both the brain and the body:

- Exercising and being physically active
- Eating a healthy and balanced diet
- Managing blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Managing stress and paying attention to mental health
- Staying socially engaged and connecting with others
- Challenging the mind with puzzles, games and learning new skills
- Getting the recommended 7-8 hours of sleep per night

## When to Talk with a Doctor



How do you know when it's the right time to talk to your doctor about brain health?

Starting a conversation with your doctor at any time is a great way to be proactive about understanding what to expect as your brain ages and learning what you can do to maintain your brain health.

The McKnight Brain Research Foundation encourages anyone with concerns about their memory or experiencing changes in memory to talk with a healthcare professional.

Source: McKnight Brain Research Foundation 2023 Consumer Survey, McKnightBrain.org/BrainWorks The MBRF survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com). Responses were solicited from 1,000 nationally representative US adults ages 18+, between December 11th and December 15th, 2023, using an email invitation and an online survey. Data has been weighted.