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FITTER ADULTS HAVE FITTER BRAINS

The research

German scientists at the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology have shown that in young adults, physical fitness is associated with better brain structure and brain functioning.

The findings

Through studying MRI brain scans and having subjects perform a two-minute walk and further cognitive testing, researchers discovered that those who performed well in both tests also had healthy white matter in the brain (known to improve the speed and quality of nerve connections). They found as fitness levels drop, so too does cognitive performance, proving that

a basic level of fitness may be a preventable risk factor for brain health.

What this means

Through this study we know that fit people have healthier brain function, but further research needs to be done to determine whether making people fitter will actually improve their brain health. Of course, if being fit leads to better cognitive health such as a sharper memory and improved problem solving, it will be another of the many benefits you can spruik to your current and potential clients, to reinforce why they need to continue to be fit and active through all stages of life. ♦

THE STUDY

THE SOURCE

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IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO START EXERCISING

The research

The University of Birmingham's School of Sport and Exercise Science research team has studied whether older adults (aged 70-80 years), who have never taken part in a sustained exercise program, have the ability to build the same muscle mass as highly trained master athletes (of a similar age).

The findings

The researchers had expected that the master athletes would have an increased ability to build muscle due to their superior levels of fitness over a prolonged period of time. In fact, the results showed that both groups had an equal capacity to build muscle in response to exercise.

What this means

This research provides great news for late starters who might be worried that they've 'missed the boat' when it comes to creating meaningful change with exercise. It also illustrates that encouraging older adults unaccustomed to exercise to take up any type of resistance or weight training is beneficial, especially when coupled with further guidance for things they can do at home, such as walking up and down stairs, lifting up shopping bags or gardening. A long-term 'whole body health' commitment is the best approach, but it's never too late for older adults to begin delaying age-related muscle weakness and frailty. ♦

THE STUDY

THE SOURCE

