

Exercise may benefit your brain more than any other part of your body

The Norwegian Directorate of Health recommends that people exercise at moderate intensity a total of 2.5 hours each week – just over 20 minutes a day.

Many people know that this reduces the risk of cancer and of cardiovascular disease. But exercise also strengthens the brain and can help reduce the risk of Alzheimer's, which some people are unaware of.

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"If physical activity were a pill, everyone would be taking it," [physician Ole Petter] Hjelle said.

He believes that for people who don't exercise, a big part of the reason is that doctors don't have this tool in their toolbox.

"When I studied medicine, I had 140 hours of instruction in pharmacology and zero hours on physical activity as medicine. It's not much better today."

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One of the most important messages [professor Arthur] Kramer can give his patients as a doctor is that it is never too late to begin, he says.

"I have a number of patients who have been less active and think that it's useless to begin once they're older. That's wrong. Physical activity can provide incredible health benefits, no matter when in life you begin."

"The brain may be the organ that is strengthened most by physical activity. Virtually all our brain areas and functions are strengthened when we move. We become more aware. Our memory improves. We become more creative. We can handle stress better," Kramer says.

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