

# Stay Mentally and Physically Fit this Summer

Ah summertime! Days filled with long, lazy days at the pool or beach, hammocks in the backyard, and sleeping in. For many, summer is a time of leisure and of relaxation, of stress-free, sun-filled days and nights, of bonfires, barbeques, and backyards.

While this idyllic image of summer may make people of all ages relaxed and content, a too-relaxed summer can be detrimental to both the body and the mind.

Here's what we know about how exercise can affect the brain:

- Keeps the brain fresh. Exercise increases blood flow to the brain, which results in a process known as neurogenesis—the re-growth of neurons in the brain.
- Better recall. Exercise affects the hippocampus, which is one of the parts of the brain that deals with memory and cognition.
- Better focus. Exercise increases neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin, which decreases feelings of depression, elevates moods, and helps to improve the ability to focus.

Interesting! Researchers found that subjects who increased their exercise quotient over a three-month period caused so many new neurons to grow that the size of their brains actually got bigger!

But exercise is only one part of the equation for an optimal summer—learning is the other half. Summer learning keeps student's minds focused and helps avoid summer learning losses. By including exercise and some form of formal learning in your family's summer schedule, your children will avoid the [summer brain drain](#) and head back to the classroom in the fall both physically and mentally fit.

