

TTIPS VOL. 11/23 – INSIGHTS
- Regular Cycling Boosts Brain Health –



INTRODUCTION

Let's see now, why did I want to write on this subject this week???? Ahhhh, I can't remember. Guess I'll go for a ride.

Well, it turns out, that's not a bad idea according to the article below. We all ride our bikes for different reasons, but I bet that we all share in common the certain knowledge that cycling frequently can help keep us physically at the top of our game. Seems that cycling can also contribute to better brain health, and all that comes with it. Yeah, that's right. Keep reading below.

Even Exercising Just Once a Month Can Boost Brain Health Decades Later

A RECENT STUDY LINKS WORKING OUT TO BETTER THINKING AND MEMORY AS YOU GET OLDER AND DEMONSTRATES THAT IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO START EXERCISING AND GAINING THE BENEFITS OF DOING SO.

BY ELIAZBETH MILLARD / BICYCLING MAGAZINE.COM

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Research on fitness often focuses on the minimum amount needed for meaningful effects. For example, commentary in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* praises short, sporadic exercise “snacks” of two minutes, done at least three times daily, for offering benefits for your overall health. Now, a new study suggests that bar might be even lower than you think: Researchers suggest that exercising just once a month could help brain health later in life.

Using data from a British study involving 1,417 people born during the same week in 1946, researchers looked at their self-reported activity levels, which included a range of pursuits, including dancing, hiking, gardening, cycling, and running. They compared those findings to cognitive tests all participants underwent at age 69, including memory function and information processing.

They found that activity to any extent, even just once a month, led to higher cognitive function, compared to those who were inactive. Those who had been active across every decade in the 50-year timespan had the highest cognitive function, but even those who began taking part in physical activity in their 60s showed better function just 10 years later than those who were more sedentary

“This provides evidence that encouraging inactive adults to do a small amount of activity, even just once a month, at any time across their life span, could preserve later-life cognition,” the study’s lead author, Sarah-Naomi James, Ph.D., research fellow at University College London, told *Bicycling*.

Although the researchers assumed that the highest levels of activity would confer even more benefits, they were surprised to find that wasn’t always the case.

“It was interesting to discover that those who did moderate amounts of activity, which in this research meant one to four times a month, had similar effects to those who did more activity,” James said.

What did make a difference, she added, was how long they’d been active. For every decade that people exercised, even at a moderate amount, their brain function improved more. “This suggests that maintaining activity across adulthood as long as possible confers the biggest effect, even with a low level of effort,” James explained.

Previous studies have also underscored that it doesn’t take much for exercise to offer protective effects, although most research emphasizes daily activity if possible. For example, research in the *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* found that doing just 10 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous exercise daily improved working memory for middle-aged participants.

In terms of why this would be the case, James noted that it’s still unclear how physical activity is linked with better cognition. Some mechanisms that have been proposed focus on how activity improves cardiovascular health—which in turn boosts blood flow to the brain—and also lowers inflammation throughout the body.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention adds that physical activity can help with emotional balance and sleep quality, both of which have a significant effect on brain health during aging.

If these effects are maintained for decades, James said, it wouldn’t be surprising that the brain would become resilient and efficient. “The takeaway here is to get moving, and it’s never too late,” she added. “But in general, the earlier the better.”

That’s all for now. Before you forget, get out there on your bike and.....

Make Every Ride Epic,

Darryl