



# DISCOVER YOUR PATH

## TO *Wellness*

*Three-part series from Solstice Senior Living*

### STEP 1

## *One Challenge at a Time*



#### WHAT IS WELLNESS?

The National Institute of Wellness (NIW) defines wellness in this way:

“Wellness is an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more successful existence.”

It’s an active process – which means it takes time and intentionality.

It needs awareness – which means paying attention to the different aspects of your life.

It requires choices – which means you’re in the driver’s seat.

Now more than ever people are focused on optimal health and wellness. A frequent topic these days is preventive measures and what can we do now that will best support our overall wellness, especially in the later years. Logically, a good place to start is with the brain. The brain is the body’s control center, responsible for every thought, motion, and emotion, as well as involuntary functions like breathing, smelling, seeing, and hearing. To keep it in prime shape, just like the body, the more you work your brain the stronger it will be. In addition, we’ve learned the food you put in your body also affects your brain health.

First, it's important to take a closer look at your current activities and how often you challenge yourself. Exercising and engaging your brain improves how it functions and promotes new brain cell growth. The goal when engaging the brain is to continually challenge it to work a little harder and learn a little more. This helps improve the brain's ability to change and adapt, which is known as [neuroplasticity](#), literally encouraging the growth of new pathways and connections that help us learn, remember, perform complex tasks and much more. Studies have shown that the more you incorporate these challenges daily, the healthier your brain will be.

## FEED YOUR BRAIN WITH A HEALTHY DIET

Various studies have shown that what you eat affects brain health tremendously. Increasing your self-awareness and determining what to keep and what to give up with your diet is a good starting point. A few simple changes can go a long way.

What is a brain-healthy diet? The primary goal of a brain-healthy diet is to lower inflammation of the brain. Dr. David Perlmutter, author of *Grain Brain*, explains a diet high in healthy fats and low in carbs and sugar supports this goal. He suggests a Mediterranean Diet or eating something similar which includes proteins and vegetables is a great way to improve brain health.



Simple lifestyle changes can make a huge impact!

- Benefits of a brain-healthy diet are brain-boosting nutrients like vitamin E, folate, Omega-3 fatty acids, carotenoids, and flavonoids, all of which are implicated in a 35%-53% reduction in the risk of Alzheimer's disease. In addition, risks of dementia and other forms of cognitive impairment may also decline as explained in the [webmd.com](#) article, "[What to Know About the MIND Diet.](#)"



“ Chef Patrick is a very hardworking, dedicated Chef to the many seniors at Solstice Senior Living. I thoroughly enjoy the innovative, enhanced dining experience Patrick and his team provide. I look forward daily to the seasonal, home-style, home-cooked meals while enjoying the socializing opportunities in the warm and comfortable dining room. My family often joins me for meals and enjoys them as much as I. We say Solstice has the best meals and dining experience in senior living! ”

**JAN C., SOLSTICE SENIOR LIVING RESIDENT  
AND KAY L., HER DAUGHTER**



“ I moved my mother into this beautiful community three months ago and I couldn't be happier! The entire management team go above and beyond for their residents every day. The food is amazing! My Mother has met some of the nicest people and she has really started to enjoy her life again. I highly recommend this community to anyone that is looking for a place for their loved one! Thank you Solstice.”

**DAUGHTER OF A  
SOLSTICE SENIOR LIVING RESIDENT**



- Foods that promote brain health:
  - According to the [AARP](#), the top five foods for a healthy brain are leafy greens (cooked or uncooked), berries, fish in moderation, nuts, and cocoa.
  - Other foods that promote brain health include gluten-free grains, fresh vegetables and fruits, legumes.
  - Eggs and dairy products promote brain health but should be eaten in moderation.
- Daily meals and snacks that incorporate brain-healthy foods are key to eating right so try those in the [bebrainfit.com](#) article, “[The MIND Diet: Eating for a Healthy Brain \(Detailed Guide\)](#).”
- Managing blood sugar levels is also essential to a healthy brain, and the [mindbodygreen.com](#) article “[How These Diabetes Experts Stabilized Their Blood Sugar With Food Alone](#)” explains why a plant-based diet can be the best way to do it.
- Eating habits for brain health can be as simple as one, eat the right foods; two, control your weight; and three, stay hydrated with plain old water, according to the [totalbrainhealth.com](#) article, “[Food For Thoughts: 3 Eating Habits That Are A Real No-Brainer.](#)”

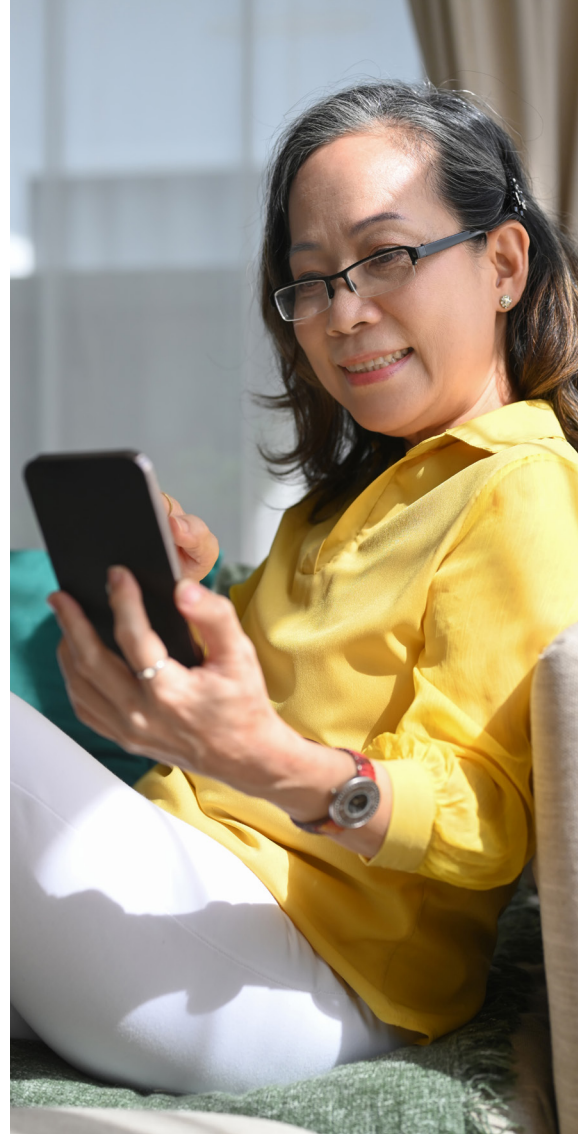
“ Our experience has been excellent. Our uncle's apartment is clean, he likes the meals, he feels at home and at the top of our list he's made new friends in the atmosphere created by the company. We applaud their family-focused management. He made the right choice. We can rest that he is happy there.”

**FAMILY MEMBER OF A SOLSTICE SENIOR LIVING RESIDENT**

## ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

A multi-prong approach to keep your brain healthy is your best bet. Keeping physically active, maintaining a diet high in brain-friendly nutrients such as Omega-3 fatty acids, and staying hydrated are some important ways to support your brain function. Beyond the basics of [word puzzles](#), [trivia](#), [Sudoku](#), [Scrabble](#) and other [memory games](#), the following are great ways to increase daily brain engagement.

- Reading — Few activities can beat reading for relieving stress and taking you away to another place or time. Whether you love mystery, romance, history, contemporary, or the classics, there is a never-ending supply of great books to enjoy including this list from [time.com](#).
- Learning a new language or skill — Learning a new language or skill is not only a useful endeavor but one that is very challenging. Learning makes our brains click into high gear opening up abilities that may have seemed lost. At the same time, learning provides a sense of accomplishment, something that is great for mood, morale, and overall well-being. For a look at some possibilities check out the life-long learning possibilities at [roadscholar.com](#).
- Music — Playing a musical instrument is a great way to express yourself and at the same time boost cognitive ability. According to [sixtyandme.com](#) playing a musical instrument is also linked to improving feelings of depression and anxiety, verbal ability, multi-tasking skills, and is often a part of rehabilitation. Whether you are starting over or starting anew, here's a look at some [instruments](#) to get going.
- Strategy games — To really stretch your mental muscles, games like chess and checkers are like bar bells for the brain. For example, *The Science Times'* article, "[10 Things Chess Does To Your Brain](#)" notes benefits like improved memory, better reading skills, improved problem solving, and even increased IQ can be expected. Similarly, the [checkers365.com](#) article "[Benefits of Playing Checkers](#)" touts checkers for improving memory, concentration, judgment, problem solving, and decision making.
- Card games — Perhaps the most portable and diverse of all games are card games. From Old Maid to Hearts to Solitaire to Pinochle, Poker, and Bridge, a simple deck of cards offers an almost unlimited number of great games for players of all ages. Playing old games or learning new ones helps the brain build memory, concentration, and other cognitive skills and some of the best for seniors are listed in the [anytimegames.com](#) article "[Card Games for Seniors Boost Mental Stimulation and Cognitive Function](#)."



- Writing — Remember writing? That thing we use to do with pencil or pen and paper? Turns out this lost art is actually great for the brain. So refresh your handwriting skills by writing your life story or memoir and get benefits like improved mental dexterity, stress relief, better memory, and more as described in the [mikomarmmi.com](https://mikomarmmi.com) article, “[7 Reasons Why Writing Benefits the Brain.](#)”
- Tutoring — Sharing knowledge with others is a gift you can give that is free and also very good for you. Passing along what you have learned in life is rewarding and can boost self-esteem, while also helping students improve in school and feel better about themselves. Many local school districts appreciate volunteer tutors as do [literacy organizations](#).

The best way to continue your journey is by taking small steps. Choose one area to focus on and keep track of your progress. For example, to track hydration, fill a container with water each morning and set a goal to finish it before evening. Another example is to have a small journal by your bedside and jot down your thoughts before starting or ending your day.

By staying mindful of brain health, and taking it one step at a time, you'll be well on your way to overall wellness.



“When I made the decision to move into a senior living community, I was living with my daughter, and I wanted to be with people my age. When I saw this community and talked with the people, I just felt this was the place for me.”

**SHARRON C.,  
SOLSTICE SENIOR LIVING RESIDENT**