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IN SEARCH FOR A NEW ALZHEIMER'S MEDICATION, AN UNUSUAL PARTNERSHIP LEADS TO SOME INTERESTING AND EVEN FUN BRIAN FITNESS EXERCISES.

Approximately 6 million people in the US are affected with Alzheimer's disease or other related dementia. There is no cure for the degenerative brain disease and the current approved medication's only treat the symptoms but do nothing to stop the underlying damage. Looking for new treatment ideas, a dozen competing drug companies have agreed to join together and share their data on thousands of Alzheimer's patients in hopes for a cure. The increased urgency is linked with statistics of the aging baby boomers. The 2010 Alzheimer's disease Facts and Figures, from the Alzheimer's Association, reveals that one in eight people aged 65 and older develops Alzheimer's. The projection for the number of South Carolinian's, aged 65 and older, with Alzheimer's increased by 19% from 2000 to 2010. It is expected to increase 49% by the year 2025.

There have been studies that have focused on alternative therapies that have led to some interesting conclusions. We have been told to eat right, exercise and increase our brain fitness! It certainly couldn't hurt and you may actually enjoy the exercises! Brain plasticity is the brains ability to change – for better or worse – throughout life. Having a brain fitness regime can protect your brain and possibly decrease your chances of having degenerative brain disease. You do not have to spend a lot of money for Brain Fitness classes – and this exercise regime can actually be a lot of fun!

The important thing to know is that you need a complete regime to improve your brain fitness. Lara Williams, Executive Director of Belfair Gardens, an assisted-living community in Bluffton, SC that specializes in the care of people who have Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia offers these tips:

***Eat Dark Chocolate:** When you eat dark chocolate you activate the systems in your brain that pump dopamine, an important brain chemical. These systems enable learning and memory to help keep your brain sharp and fit.

***Memorize a song:** Choose a song you enjoy but do not know all of the words to. Listen carefully – as many times as you need – and write down the lyrics. Then learn to sing along! This helps you develop better habits of careful listening that will help you in your understanding, thinking and remembering. Reconstructing the song requires close attention and focuses which aides in an active memory by releasing the neurotransmitter acetylcholine, a brain chemical that enables plascity and vivifies memory.

***Learn to use your other hand:** Start with brushing your teeth with your left hand (or vice-versa) and build your way to more complex tasks such as eating – doing this can drive your brain to make positive changes. Think of the millions of neurons learning new tricks as you finally establish better control of that other hand!

“As brain fitness is added into our daily routines, it is important to be diverse in the physical and mental activities your brain needs to make the positive changes,” says Ms. Williams. “Just keep adding to your regime and every day ask yourself - What are you going to do for your brain today?”

Belfair Gardens is located at 60 Oak Forest Road Bluffton, SC 29910.

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