

Aerobic physical activity improves cognitive function in older people

Clinical question	How effective is physical activity, aimed at improving cardiorespiratory fitness, on cognitive function in older people (>55 years) without known cognitive impairment?
Bottom line	Aerobic physical activities which improve cardiorespiratory fitness (an increase in VO2 max of approximately 14%) are beneficial for cognitive function in healthy older adults, with effects observed for motor function, cognitive speed, delayed memory functions and auditory and visual attention.
Caveat	The cognitive functions which improved were not the same in each study, and the majority of comparisons yielded no significant results. Aerobic activity improves cardiovascular fitness, but it is not known whether this sort of fitness is necessary for improved cognitive function.
Context	Physical activity is beneficial for healthy ageing. A regular exercise programme can slow down or prevent functional decline associated with ageing and improve health in this age group. It is thought it may also help maintain good cognitive function in older age.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Angevaren G et al. Physical activity and enhanced fitness to improve cognitive function in older people without known cognitive impairment. Cochrane Reviews 2008, Issue 1. Art. No.: CD005381. DOI:10.1002/14651858.CD005381.pub2. This review contains 11 studies involving 619 participants.
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