

# What You Need to Know about Brain Health, TV, and Middle Age

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If you're like most consumers, you spent the pandemic watching more TV. However, if you're middle aged and concerned about your brain health, you may want to put down the remote.

[Three new studies](#) add to the evidence that watching a lot of TV in your middle years can negatively affect your cognitive function in later years. The researchers found that "the more television you watch in your 40s, 50s, and 60s, the greater your risk of brain health issues in later years."

At the same time, 61% of consumers say they have watched more TV since the outbreak of the pandemic, according to a survey published in TVTech magazine. The spike is likely to continue too, with 86% saying they plan to maintain or increase those rates.

**How can you protect your brain without giving up your favorite shows?** Learn more about practical ways to change your TV habits.

## **Tips for Making TV Time Healthier:**

- 1. Be selective.** Many experts recommend two hours or less of TV a day for adults. Decide In advance what you want to watch instead of channel surfing. Recording shows may help you fulfill your resolutions.
- 2. Socialize it. Make TV time less passive.** Enjoy family movie nights or use an app to watch Netflix with your friends.

3. **Think positive.** Mental health matters too. Change your news sources or cut back if the headlines are making you depressed. Consider cooking shows and comedies if you usually watch crime dramas.
4. **Make screen-free zones.** Ban electronic devices from certain hours and spaces That may include meals and at least two hours before going to bed.
5. **Snack light.** It's easy to consume a bag of chips or candy while you're bingeing *The Queen's Gambit*. Switch to plain popcorn or pita chips with hummus and drink plenty of water.
6. **Take breaks. Press the pause button at least once each half hour.** Stand up and stretch. Do pushups and crunches during commercials.
7. **Sign a contract.** Having family support could strengthen your commitment. Sign an agreement about TV time and other screen practices for your home. Give yourself rewards for following through.

#### **Other Tips for Protecting Brain Health:**

1. **Work out.** Your physical health affects your brain functions. Exercise regularly with a balanced program of activities you enjoy and will want to stick with.
2. **Move around. Spend more time on your feet.** Climb stairs instead of riding the elevator. Do household chores manually and start a vegetable garden.
3. **Eat healthy.** Choose foods that reduce inflammation and help protect your brain, heart, and other organs. **Smart choices include leafy green vegetables, fruit, fish, nuts, and dark chocolate.**

4. **Get a hobby.** Replace TV time with more active and enriching activities. Experiment with different crafts you can make for fun or profit. Play a musical instrument or join a volleyball league.
  
5. **Maintain social contacts.** Stay in touch with family and friends. Make new connections by volunteering in your community and hanging out in places where you can find others who share your interests.
  
6. **Sleep well. Seven to eight hours of sleep each night is essential for brain health.** Turn off the TV and go to bed, so you can wake up feeling refreshed.

**It's still an open question whether cognitive decline is caused by TV directly or by an overall sedentary lifestyle.** However, you can help keep your brain healthy as you age by limiting screen time and staying mentally and physically engaged.