Addressing Cognitive Decline with Exercise

What is Mild Cognitive Impairment and what does it look like?

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) is the stage between the expected cognitive decline of normal aging and the more serious decline of dementia. It can involve problems with memory, language, thinking and judgment that are greater than normal age-related changes (Mayo Clinic, 2018).

One experiencing MCI may experience the following:

- Forgetting important events such as appointments
- Losing train of thought
- Being increasingly overwhelmed by making decisions, planning steps to

accomplish a task, or understanding instructions.

- Having trouble finding your way around familiar environments.
- Becoming impulsive or show increasingly poor judgment.

(Mayo Clinic, 2018)

Can physical activity improve my cognition?

Studies have shown that individuals who are more active in midlife and late life have lower risk for global cognitive decline. A study called the Honolulu–Asia Aging Study in men and the Nurses' Health Study in women have showed that higher levels of physical activity, including walking, are associated with better cognitive function and lower risk of cognitive decline and dementia (Kirk-Sanchez, N. J., & McGough, E. L, 2014).

What types of health care professionals can help address risk factors associated with cognitive decline?

Primary Care Doctor – a primary care doctor can set the parameters as to what type of physical activity may best suit you.

PT – A physical therapist can help improve your mobility, strength, and range of motion.

OT – An occupational therapist can help you engage in activities of daily living (ADL's) such as bathing, eating, toileting, mobility and dressing.

How can exercise allow me to participate in the activities I enjoy?

Getting older is a natural process, as we get older certain parts of our brains shrink, communication between neurons is reduced and blood flow decreases. These changes affect the way our brain works. These changes can lead to a person becoming dependent on others. It is recommended that older adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise a week, which factors out to about 30 minutes a day ("Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans", 2018). In general exercise offers numerous health benefits. Exercise has been shown to lower the risk of cardiovascular disease mortality, improve quality of life, reduce the risk of depression, improve bone health, lower the risk for falls, and lower the risk for fall related injuries ("Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans", 2018). Exercise makes it easier to perform daily task, such as walking long distances, lifting heavy objects, and allow you to successfully reach and grab items over your head. Stretching helps with flexibility and makes activities such as getting up from a chair easier. Walking is an enjoyable low impact activity that can be done at any pace. Sit and be fit exercises allow the individual to perform exercise from a modified seated position.

Resources:

Walking Group in Detroit

https://www.dmc.org/events/riverwalkers#:~:text=RiverWalkers%20is%20a%20senior%20walking,Detroit%20RiverWalk%20and%20fitness%20classes.

Sit and Be Fit YouTube Channel

https://www.youtube.com/user/SitandBeFitTVSHOW

Chair Stretching Video

https://www.google.com/search?q=stretching+for+seniors&oq=stretching+for+sen&aqs=chrome.0.0j69i57j0l6.4249j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#kpvalbx=_djPjXrrmNbyMwbkPpqWL8Ao53

Links to Articles

Normal cognitive Aging

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4015335/#:~:text=Cognitive%20change%20as%20a%20normal,speed%2C%20decline%20gradually%20over%20time.

Works Cited

Mayo Clinic (2018, August 23). *Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)* https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/mild-cognitive-impairment/symptoms-causes/syc-20354578#:~:text=Mild%20cognitive%20impairment%20(MCI)%20is,than%20normal%20age%2Drelated%20changes.

Kirk-Sanchez, N. J., & McGough, E. L. (2014). Physical exercise and cognitive performance in the elderly: current perspectives. *Clinical interventions in aging*, *9*, 51–62. https://doi.org/10.2147/CIA.S39506