

# Use it or lose it: Mind games help healthy older people too

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Cognitive training including puzzles, handicrafts and life skills are known to reduce the risk, and help slow down the progress, of dementia amongst the elderly. A new study published in BioMed Central's open access journal *BMC Medicine* showed that cognitive training was able to improve reasoning, memory, language and hand eye co-ordination of healthy, older adults.

It is estimated that by 2050 the number of people over 65 years old will have increased to 1.1 billion worldwide, and that 37 million of these will suffer from dementia. Research has already shown that mental activity can reduce a person's risk of dementia but the effect of mental training on healthy people is less well understood. To address this researchers from China have investigated the use of cognitive training as a defence against mental decline for healthy [older adults](#) who live independently.

To be recruited onto the trial participants had to be between 65 and 75 years old, and have good enough eyesight, hearing, and communication skills, to be able to complete all parts of the training. The hour long training sessions occurred twice a week, for 12 weeks, and the subjects were provided with homework. Training included a multi-approach system tackling memory, reasoning, problem solving, [map reading](#), handicrafts, health education and exercise, or focussing on reasoning only. The effect of booster training, provided six months later, was also tested.

The results of the study were positive. Profs Chunbo Li and Wenyuan Wu who led the research explained, "Compared to the [control group](#), who received no training, both levels of cognitive training improved [mental ability](#), although the multifaceted training had more of a long term effect. The more detailed training also improved memory, even when measured a year later and booster training had an additional improvement on mental ability scores."

This study shows that cognitive training therapy may prevent [mental decline](#) amongst healthy older people and help them to continue independent living longer in their advancing years.

**More information:** The effects of multi-domain versus single-domain cognitive training in non-demented older people: a randomized controlled trial. Yan Cheng, Wenyuan Wu, Wei Feng, Jiaqi Wang, You Chen, Yuan Shen, Qingwei Li, Xu Zhang and Chunbo Li. *BMC Medicine* (in press)

Provided by BioMed Central

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