

Music boost for brain health

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MANY studies have focused on the best foods for maintaining brain health, including oily fish, spinach, certain spices and dark chocolate, but there are also some everyday activities, within the reach of most people, that can improve cognitive performance.

Music is one such activity. Not only can music be a source of pleasure, but it may also be a key element in improving certain cognitive functions, and maintaining a healthy brain as we age. These are the findings of a new study by researchers at the University of Exeter, UK, who looked at the impact of playing an instrument, as well as singing, on the brain health of people in their 40s and beyond.

Published in the 'International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry', the findings point to a link between an improvement in memory and ability to solve complex tasks and playing a musical instrument, particularly the piano.

Music was found to be beneficial for improving executive function, but that's not all. Researchers also report better brain health was associated with singing, although they pointed out via the press release that "this may also be due to the social factors of being part of a choir or group". Interestingly, while it has already been demonstrated that playing a musical instrument as a child can help people age well, this research highlights that continuing this activity at a later age "provides even greater benefit".