



## HEALTHY MIND

### 1,000 Pieces to a Healthy Mind

#### Use Puzzles to Improve Mental Health

Whether your strategy is finding all the straight edges first before working on the inside pieces or collecting all the same coloured pieces at once, working on a jigsaw puzzle or any puzzle is good for the brain. But how does looking at 1,000 separate pieces connected by a single image or a group of missing letters linked by a clue actually help improve your mental health.

The science points to the fact that both sides of the brain are being used when working on puzzles. The left side handles all the logic and follows patterns while the right side is responsible for creativity and intuition. The more your brain is being used, the stronger it gets.

Furthermore, you often hear people saying, “Puzzles can be so addicting.” In this case, the addiction is a positive one because constant focus on the same image or some fragmented letter sequence for a long period of time can turn out to be like meditation by bringing a sense of calmness and relaxation to your mind.

Puzzles are also great activities for an individual or a group. For a group setting, such as a workplace, Dr.

Owen Garrett, Registered Psychologist at Active Insights Health Care, suggests setting up a large puzzle for co-workers to work on during their break time. It acts as a team-building activity and encourages everyone to get up from their desks to refocus on something different from their regular work.

Give it a try and you’ll be surprised to see how many people crowd around the puzzle during the lunch hour in search of the straight edges!

## HEALTHY HEART

### Flossing is Fundamental

#### How Oral Health is Linked to Heart Health

What keeps the doctor away? Is it eating an apple once a day? Perhaps that’s true but emerging research is showing that regular flossing may help keep a host of ailments, including heart disease at bay.

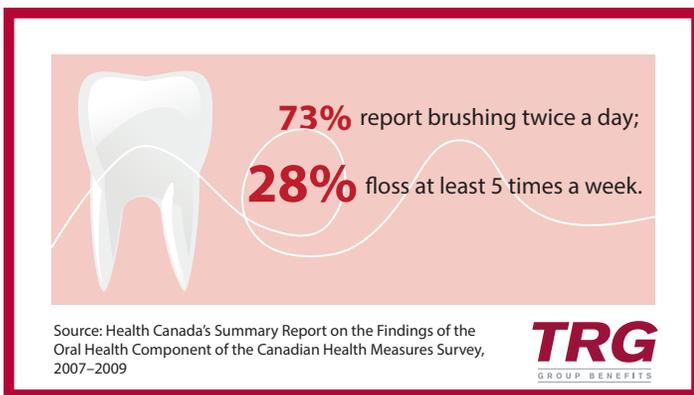
A study in the *Journal of Periodontology* confirms that people who have periodontal disease are at an increased risk for cardiovascular disease. When the bacteria in the mouth is released into the bloodstream, it can lead to hardening of the arteries, which can result in a heart attack or stroke.

Another study done by the University of Buffalo had a similar finding. Those suffering from periodontal

disease are shown to have an increased release of potentially harmful bacteria into the bloodstream, which then prompts the liver to produce C-reactive proteins. High levels of these proteins have been associated with an inflammation that's common in cardiovascular disease.

Good oral hygiene is an important component to your physical health. Regular brushing alone isn't enough. Regular flossing is a must as it helps promote a healthy heart by clearing food that's stuck between two teeth and, more importantly, removing the layer of bacteria that forms around your teeth before it turns to plaque. If it does turn to plaque and still not removed, you are at risk for the development of gum disease and other problems.

Like all ailments, prevention is key. In addition to brushing and flossing, following a healthy diet coupled with regular dental visits are recommended by the Canadian Dental Association for ongoing care for your teeth, overall health and ultimately, staying away from the doctor's office.



## HEALTHY LIVING

### Feeling Hungry?

#### Reasons for the Frequent Hunger Pangs

Do you hear your stomach grumbling? Do you feel lightheaded or unable to concentrate? Are you looking forward to your next meal or just a small snack to hold you over for a few hours?

Feeling hungry isn't necessarily a bad thing. It's your body's natural way of telling you to refuel because your stomach is empty. It is how often you are feeling hungry that should be more concerning.

If you are hungry three or four hours after your last meal, it is completely normal. According to nutritionist Leslie Beck, anything outside of this range might be due to the following reasons:

- Not enough protein or healthy fat is included in your meal/snack. Since protein and heart-healthy unsaturated fat stay in your stomach for a longer period of time, you retain the feeling of fullness longer.
- The hunger pangs caused by skipping the first meal of the day may lead you to overeat at your next meal and possibly throughout the day. Eat a satisfying breakfast, consisting of protein (eggs, Greek yogurt), and low-glycemic carbohydrates (steel cut oats, whole-grain bread and most types of fruits).
- Dehydration tends to make you feel tired, so you might resort to eating food to re-energize. Drink plenty of water during the day and especially after your meal to help with digestion. If water doesn't excite you, eat hydrating fruits (strawberries, apricots, watermelon) and vegetables (cucumber, carrots, celery).
- Sleep deprivation can drive hunger and sugar cravings, which in turn, sends you to look for sugary foods to boost your energy. Strive to get the recommended seven to nine hours of quality sleep each night to fend off the cravings.
- Stress hormones trigger the release of ghrelin, a hunger hormone that tells your brain it's time to eat. Learn to manage your stress levels as it will also help manage your hunger.