

**National Institute on Aging (NIA)/National Institutes of Health (NIH):
Advanced Cognitive Training for Independent and Vital Elderly
(ACTIVE)**

The ACTIVE study showed that certain mental exercises can offset some of the expected decline in older adults' thinking skills and show promise for maintaining cognitive abilities needed to do everyday tasks such as shopping, making meals and handling finances.

Lead Agency:

National Institute on Aging (NIA)

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Agency Mission:

- Support and conduct genetic, biological, clinical, behavioral, social, and economic research related to the aging process, diseases and conditions associated with aging, and other special problems and needs of older Americans.
- Foster the development of research and clinician scientists in aging.
- Communicate information about aging and advances in research on aging to the scientific community, health care providers, and the public.

Principal Investigators:

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Partner Agency:

National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR)

General Description:

Results from the NIH-supported **Advanced Cognitive Training for Independent and Vital Elderly (ACTIVE)** study demonstrated, for the first time in a randomized, controlled trial, that certain mental exercises can offset some of the expected decline in older adults' thinking skills and show promise for maintaining cognitive abilities needed to do everyday tasks such as shopping, making meals and handling finances. Some of the benefits of the short-term training tested in this study lasted for as long as five years.

Excellence: What makes this project exceptional?

The ACTIVE study is the first randomized, controlled trial to demonstrate long-lasting, positive effects of brief cognitive training in older adults, and the only trial to date in which the effects of mental exercises were assessed after five years for both cognitive and functional status.

Significance: How is this research relevant to older persons, populations and/or an aging society?

Some studies suggest that as many as 22.2 percent of Americans age 71 and older – some 5.4 million people – display some level of cognitive impairment that does not reach the threshold for a diagnosis of dementia. This study offers hope that cognitive training may be useful, demonstrating that relatively brief targeted exercises can produce durable changes.

Effectiveness: What is the impact and/or application of this research to older persons?

Although these findings are promising, further research is needed to determine how these and similar interventions can best be employed in real-world settings.

Innovativeness: Why is this exciting or newsworthy?

This is the first randomized, controlled trial to demonstrate long-lasting, positive effects of cognitive training in older adults. Cognitive exercises are potentially less expensive than pharmacological interventions, with fewer side effects.