

Wouldn't you agree that most people play pickleball because it's so much fun?! But there's more to it – both physical and cognitive benefits as well.

Any form of exercise increases a vital protein, Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor (BDNF), as well as endorphins. BDNF helps maintain the health of nerve cells, promotes the growth of new neurons and synapses, and improves the overall function of the neural network. What does that mean??? Improved memory, sharper thinking, and a decreased risk of neurological diseases like Alzheimer's and depression.

According to Dr. David Perlmutter, it's not just the exercise that Pickleball provides, but with its unique play style it's a "brain-boosting sport requiring strategic thinking, motor coordination, and balance." As players advance, play at the kitchen line increases, requiring quicker reflexes, more thinking on your feet, split-second decisions, and intricate hand-eye coordination. Pickleball at its highest level isn't about running faster and hitting harder, it's about using your brain to play smarter.

Pickleball also fosters social interaction. One of the residents alongside courts 5 & 6 used to sit on their patio and watch us play because "they loved to listen to the laughter and trash-talking". Primarily a doubles game, there is constant bantering, strategy, and laughter. Research shows this type of social interaction can reduce dementia and boost overall brain health in addition to reducing type 2 diabetes, obesity, flexibility and improving muscle strength.

Of course, we all know the benefits of exercise, stay fit, increase muscle, lose weight. But Pickleball provides so much more in addition to that. So next time you play, give yourself kudos for exercising your brain as well as your body!