



Brain fitness for seniors helps fight off dementia

by Wendy Rigby / KENS 5

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Keeping sharp as we age isn't just a good idea. Health professionals say it's essential to living a full life.

Now, one San Antonio independent living facility is going high tech to help its residents maintain their brains.

At the Meadows Retirement Community at Morningside Ministries, computers and technology are just part of daily living, like playing the Wii in the recreation area. This month, the Meadows added a special program called Brain Fitness that's helping residents maintain their mental acuity. Call it calisthenics for the mind.

It's a new tool for people like 92-year-old Harris Shinn, a retired preacher who still gives sermons every Sunday.

"It's a challenge every time so that I look forward to it," Shinn said.

"It's just like with your muscles," explained Teresa Jones, director of resident services at the Meadows. "If you don't use them, you lose them. Same thing with your brain cells. They are just loving it. And they are feeling like it's really helping them. They are very excited about it."

80-year-old Julie Little suffered a stroke several years ago. She uses the Brain Fitness system every day. "You never get the same thing twice," she said. "You're improving in the same area, but in a slightly different way. It never gets boring."

The games and puzzles target memory, critical thinking, spatial orientation, calculation and language. But most resident say it's really just fun.

“It’s amazing,” Shinn noted. “I am so thrilled with it.”

Medical research has shown that long-term participation in cognitive stimulation like this can reduce the risk of dementia by 60%. Since a Brain Fitness session only takes 20 minutes, many resident say it’s definitely worth their time.

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