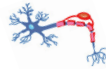


Living Well with AIMGA

VOL. 6 - ALL ABOUT NEURONS



OVERVIEW

Neurons, also called nerve cells, are foundational units of the brain and nervous system that are responsible for receiving sensory information from the outside world, sending motor signals and commands to our muscles, and constantly transforming and sending electrical signals. We have over 86 billion neurons in our brains! In this newsletter, we will discuss neurons on a deeper level, including their connectivity to the body and brain, neurodegenerative/motor neuron diseases, and other neurological conditions. Some of the topics that will be touched on include Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), Multiple sclerosis (MS), Epilepsy, and Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS). This month marks both Brain Injury Awareness Month and ALS Awareness Month, which the Health and Wellness Team aims to highlight through the content in this newsletter. The Health and Wellness Team encourages you to continue “Living well with AIMGA” and educate yourself on the wonders of your nerves, brain, and spinal cord!

Sources: [Queensland Brain Institute](#); [National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, 2023](#); [Herculano-Houzel, 2012](#); [Azevedo, et al., 2009](#)



HEALTH REMINDERS!

- **June is “Stroke Awareness Month”.** New data shows that stroke in Canada continues to rise. According to data more than 89,000 strokes occur each year due to the aging population. For this reason, let's make Healthy lifestyle choices such as: a balanced diet, more exercise at moderate-intensity, avoiding smoking and alcohol consumption, and healthy stress management. Since 2014, The [Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada](#) recommends the use of “FAST”: Face – is it drooping? Arm – can you raise both? Speech – is it slurred or jumbled? Time – to call 9-11 right away.
- **June 21st is “World Migraine Awareness Day”.** Migraine is a common health condition, affecting around 1 in every 5 women and around 1 in every 15 men. These neurological events cause a variety of symptoms, including a throbbing/pulsing headache on one side of the head. There are things you can do to avoid “triggering” a migraine, including reducing stress, eating regular meals, drinking lots of water, avoiding alcohol consumption, getting a healthy sleep, and avoiding extremes of heat or cold weather, loud noises, bright lights, and strong smells. These things can stabilize the brain and make it more resistant to attack ([Migraine Canada](#)).
- It is dangerous to stop medications or change doses on one's own without medical advice, especially when it comes to **anti-seizure medications**. These work best when they are taken at regular intervals and without any missed doses. If you have seizures that change your awareness, consciousness, or muscle control, you may not have the legal right to drive. You may have to be seizure-free for at least 6 months to 1 year before you can get a [driver's license](#). You can talk to your doctor about this, if applicable, as laws vary from province to province.
- Brain injury can be caused by many things, such as a fall, contact with an object or with a person, motor vehicle accident, etc. Let's recap some **tips to prevent a concussion**: ensure floors and steps are clear of objects; improve lighting so that all areas of your home are well lit; provide opportunities for healthy habits and exercise; wear a helmet when biking, skateboarding, skiing, snowboarding, or participating in any sport or activity where one is at risk of damaging their brain; ensure your gear is up to safety standards; stay away from reckless play or activities; ensure your child has a proper car seat or seat belt being used; only drive when focused and alert; always wear a seatbelt in your vehicle.



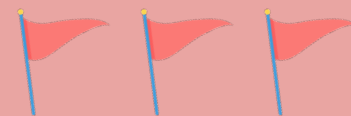
RED FLAGS

- 1 **Early signs of ALS** include: tripping, dropping things, slurred or “thick” speech, difficulty swallowing, weight loss, loss of muscle tone, shortness of breath, decreased or increased reflexes, uncontrollable laughter or crying periods
- 2 **Early signs of GBS** include: a history of infections, ascending weakness starting from lower limbs, loss of deep tendon reflexes
- 3 If you have a **suspected head injury or concussion**, please monitor carefully, as brain injuries are very serious. Call 911 or have someone take you to emerge if you are drowsy, confused, restless or agitated, have blood or fluid coming from ears, nose, or bruising around the eyes or ears, blurry/double vision, slurred speech, sudden weakness on one side of body, vomiting, or seizure activity.
- 4 If someone near you is **having a seizure: 1) Stay Calm** (most often, a seizure will run its course and end naturally within a few minutes), **2) Time It** (call 911 if: the seizure lasts more than 5 minutes, the person is pregnant or has diabetes,

Sources: [ALS Canada](#); [Merck Manuals, 2022](#); [CMAJ, 2021](#); [Government of Alberta, 2023](#); [Canadian Epilepsy Alliance, 2023](#); [Canadian League Against Epilepsy](#)

is injured or in danger from the seizure (e.g., occurs in water), **3) Assess Surroundings and Protect from Injury** (check to see if they are wearing a medical bracelet; move sharp objects away; if they fall to the ground, roll them on their side when safe to do so; place something soft under their head; if they wander during the seizure, stay by their side and steer them away from danger), and **4) Provide Reassurance and Support** when the seizure ends, as they will often be confused afterward.

- 5 According to CMA and CCMTA guidelines, a driver with newly diagnosed epilepsy is allowed to drive a car after being seizure free for at least 6 months (rules differ for commercial drivers). You can discuss driving restrictions with your doctor if applicable.



DID YOU KNOW?



AIMGA experts are available to speak to your organization on this topic.

Book your presentation today by emailing drew@aimga.ca

For more information, check out the full version of the “Living Well With AIMGA” Newsletter by scanning the QR code below with your phone!



<https://aimga.ca/wp-content/uploads/6.June2023-LivingWithAIMGA-Newsletter.pdf>