



Dr Miriam Stoppard: Why table tennis is great for the brain

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Super-agers – that's people whose biological age is lower than their actual age – should consider taking up the game of ping pong, according to TV presenter Dr Miriam Stoppard.

Why? "Because table tennis is the perfect activity to keep you happy, healthy, active and in good spirits" Dr Stoppard has claimed in a [recent article on her blog](#).

"Table tennis is the perfect activity to keep well. It doesn't only keep your body fit, it keeps your brain fit. All that complicated hand-eye co-ordination works its magic with brain cells and helps prevent dementia.

The game is one of the fastest racket sports, requiring muscle and cardio endurance. You need nimble footwork and upper body flexibility to return balls that come towards you at 60mph, demanding faster response times than tennis or to badminton."

She continues by quoting Alessandro Moura Zagatto, a sports physiologist and researcher at Sao Paulo State University in Brazil, who [has found](#) that skilled table tennis players workouts are comparable to moderate rowing

"While the energy expenditure needed [to play table tennis] is about the same as archery or bowling, skilled players use much more."

Dr Stoppard used a [2014 study](#) of 164 Korean women aged 60 and older to further support Mr Zagatto's research.

The study showed that table tennis improved more brain function than dancing, walking, gymnastics or – resistance training.

“Exercise duration and frequency did not influence cognitive function, but results indicated that table tennis exerted a greater influence on cognitive function than other types of exercise did.”

And to conclude Dr Stoppard, who has been at the forefront of the revolution in health information since she began her writing and broadcasting career in the early 1970s, outlined a set of tips for any budding players who might have been inspired to pick up a bat.

The tips included the following:

Concentration and mindfulness will help keep your eye on the ball.

Stay focused. Keep alert to spinning balls. Don't rush to attack.

If you're prepared to stick with it, your coordination and stamina will improve. You may even win the odd game, then a few more, and soon you'll be playing doubles.

Keep a water bottle nearby as you'll be sweating, and sip water between points. Stop when you're tired and give yourself a pat on the back.

You'll feel so good you'll find you don't want to give up ping pong.”

Dr Stoppard's blog has been released as part of [Mental Health Awareness week](#), which runs from 8-14 May.

You can find out more about what Table Tennis England is doing to [support mental health here](#).

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