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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Saint Luke's Brain and Stroke Institute opens "brain gym"**

*New Brain Fitness Center targets the "worried well" concerned with memory loss*

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** – As people age, almost everyone notices a slowing of memory and other cognitive functions. Nearly 80 million baby boomers are reaching the age when this age-related cognitive decline (ARCD) begins to happen, and they are determined to keep their brains as fit as their bodies.

Now, just like a personal trainer at a gym, the new Brain Fitness Center at Saint Luke's Hospital offers a version of a health club for people who want to assess and improve brain fitness.

"Cognitive decline was once thought to be an inevitable part of growing old — it may not be either inevitable nor permanent," said neurologist Marilyn Rymer, M.D., Brain Fitness Center medical director. "Research is showing that the brain is remarkably 'plastic' and responsive to training through specific activity."

The Brain Fitness Center is beneficial for:

- The "worried well" – those individuals who are either noticing some degree of ARCD or want to avoid it in order to maintain an optimum level of functionality by maximizing their brain fitness, reasoning, memory, information processing, and verbal agility.
- Anyone diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment who is living independently or with minimal supervision. These individuals may minimize the effects of disability, maintain independence, and help postpone advancement of the disease.
- People with more advanced cognitive limitations, either from advancing Alzheimer's disease, brain injury due to stroke, head trauma, brain tumor, or other brain disease.

The Brain Fitness Center team includes:

- Speech-language pathologists
- Physical therapists
- Registered dietitians

After a comprehensive evaluation by the team, clients will participate in an eight- to 10-week program of individual and group stimulation, designed to develop and enhance brain fitness. Modules include:

- Fitness screening and health planning consultation
- Mindfulness-based stress management training and practice
- Diet and nutrition education and consultation
- Neuro-targeted cognitive training

Brain Fitness Center services for those with stroke or other brain injury may be seen in a small group or individual sessions.

The neuro-targeted cognitive training is the predominant module in the Brain Fitness Center program. Individual computer-based training is designed to maintain brain function, enhance cognitive abilities, and promote brain plasticity. And it's fun! Brain Fitness Center participants will also have access to the latest investigational trials of new pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of Alzheimer's and other dementias.

A physician can refer clients to the center, or clients can self-refer. A medical clearance will be obtained to identify potential barriers to successful program participation. As with a typical health club, a fee will be charged for select Brain Fitness Center services.

The Brain Fitness Center is funded by a gift from the Oppenstein Brothers Foundation and offered through the renowned Saint Luke's Brain and Stroke Institute, a comprehensive, integrated inpatient and outpatient program dedicated to improving outcomes in patients with diseases of the nervous system and spine.

For more information on the Brain Fitness Center, call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220 or visit [saintlukeshealthsystem.org](http://saintlukeshealthsystem.org) and use the search term "brain."

*Saint Luke's Brain and Stroke Institute is a member of Saint Luke's Health System, which consists of 11 area hospitals and many primary care practices, and provides a range of inpatient, outpatient, and home care services. Founded as a faith-based, not-for-profit organization, our mission includes a commitment to the highest levels of excellence in health care and the advancement of medical research and education. The health system is an aligned organization in which the physicians and hospitals assume responsibility for enhancing the physical, mental, and spiritual health of people in the metropolitan Kansas City area and the surrounding region.*

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