

July: Keeping Your Memory Sharp



Time is your memory's worst enemy. By the time you're in your 20s, you already begin to lose brain cells a few at a time. Our bodies will also start to make less of certain chemicals that brain cells need to work efficiently. Even though both these changes start occurring early they are not very significant at a young age. The older one gets, the more these changes affect the memory. These are the natural reasons for common memory loss that affect everyone. Here are some other factors that could potentially harm memory but don't affect all of us and could even be prevented:

- Stress and anxiety
- ADHD
- Depression
- Metabolic diseases such as thyroid gland diseases, diabetes, and lung, liver or kidney failure
- Alcoholism
- Vitamin B-12 deficiency
- Infections
- Drugs, both prescription and illegal

The good news is that memory loss from many of these conditions can normally be reversible; and preventing these conditions when possible is another good way to control memory loss. In addition there are many preventable measures one could take to keep the memory sharp.

- Stay mentally active: Physical activity help keeps your body in shape, just like mentally stimulating activities help keep your brain in shape. Do crossword puzzles, Sudoku puzzles, take alternate driving routes, learn to play a musical instrument or volunteer at a community organization. ⁽¹⁾
- Socialize regularly: Social interaction helps lessen the risk of depression and stress, both of which can contribute to memory loss. ⁽¹⁾
- Get organized: Start keeping a calendar and repeat each entry out loud as you write it in to cement it into your memory. Make to-do lists and set aside certain areas for essentials like car keys and wallets. ⁽¹⁾
- Focus: Limit distractions and don't try to do too many things at once. The more you focus on one subject the more likely you will be to recall it later. ⁽¹⁾

- Include physical activity in your daily routine: Physical activity increases blood flow to your whole body, including your brain. Even a few 10 minute walks throughout the day can reenergize brain power. ⁽¹⁾
- Manage chronic conditions: Follow doctor's treatment recommendations for any chronic conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure and depression. The better you take care of yourself, the better your memory will be. ⁽¹⁾

Nutrition also plays a huge role in brain health. Not all memory problems are caused by diet. But when nothing else is to blame, it may be what you're eating - or not eating. Follow these tips for a brain optimal diet.

- B is for Brain: Vitamin B helps to turn food into mental energy and to manufacture and repair brain tissues. ⁽²⁾
- Grab dairy: Studies show that eating just one serving of low-fat, low-sugar dairy once a day will decrease chances of developing Alzheimer's disease. ⁽²⁾
- Toast to a young brain: Drink one glass of red wine or 4 ounces of purple grape juice or pomegranate juice a day. Both contain resveratrol, a compound that doctors believe activates a gene associated with longevity. ⁽²⁾
- Eat berries: Berries contain resveratrol. Eat 1 cup a day to benefit. ⁽²⁾
- Vitamin C: Fruits and vegetables have plenty of vitamin c and other antioxidants that help protect the brain against dementia. ⁽²⁾
- Fish Oil: Omega-3 fatty acids are power agents for a healthy heart and arteries. Fish, walnuts, or fish oil or flax oil supplements are all great sources of Omega-3. ⁽²⁾
- Green Tea: Rich in antioxidants and has been associated with reduced risk of dementia. Experts recommend drinking 1-2 cups a day. ⁽²⁾

1. Mayo Clinic. Memory loss: 7 tips to improve your memory. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/memory-loss/HA00001/NSECTIONGROUP=2>

2. Yeager, S. (2007). The Doctor's Book of Food Remedies. New York: Rodale Inc.

