

Seven Steps to Better Memory



If you talk to anyone over a certain age, they will joke about lapses in memory or “senior moments”. There’s a distinct advantage in this: your secrets are safe with your friends because they can’t remember them either.

Although scientists have not come up with any magic bullets to keep our minds intact, we do know that the brain can either be protected or devastated by lifestyle choices we make every day. Here are seven steps to enhance memory:

1. Exercise regularly – three or more times a week. Physical activity improves brain oxygen levels, blood flow and filtration of waste products. Staying lean is a good bet to keep inflammation levels low. As little as 1 ½ hours per week can make a difference.
2. Stick to a healthy diet. The brain responds well to a heart-smart diet rich in fruit, veggies, whole grains and moderate amounts of monounsaturated fats such as olive oil and omega-3 fatty acids found in fish, flaxseed and walnuts.
3. Take a multivitamin with a daily value for folic acid (400 mcg), vitamin B-6 (2 mg) and B-12 (6mcg) to combat homocysteine, a blood protein that is elevated in the brains of people with Alzheimer’s. (Many studies have found a higher risk of heart disease and stroke in people with high homocysteine levels as well.)
4. Get enough sleep. During sleep the hippocampus, where memory is stored, becomes highly active and moves short-term thoughts to long-term memory. As people age, possible cognition deterioration occurs because sleep is interrupted.
5. Devise memory strategies. Make notes or underline key passages to help you remember what you have ad. Writing helps transfer items from shoo to long term memory. Invent mnemonics (memory aides; words that are comprised of the first letters of items in a list.)
6. Maintain active social relationships. People who maintain active social relationships during the second half of life are generally mentally and physically healthier than their more isolated counterparts. Satisfyingly rich social relationships reduce the effects of stress, including anxiety and depression, and stimulate brain activity.
7. Do mental aerobics. You can replenish all neuron functions if you push and test your brain in a process called “pushing the threshold”. You can work on your own threshold by doing things that challenge your brain. Master new skills, dance, play a musical instrument, read or try to figure out what the heck rapper, Eminem, is trying to say...or maybe it’s better we don’t know.

