

DISCLAIMER: This information is not presented by a medical practitioner and is for educational and informational purposes only. The content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read.

Since natural and/or dietary supplements are not FDA approved they must be accompanied by a two-part disclaimer on the product label: that the statement has not been evaluated by FDA and that the product is not intended to "diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease."

Copyright © WCCL 2006. All rights reserved.

How to Improve Your Memory!



Table of Contents

What happens to the brain as we age?

Memory loss or just absentmindedness?

Is memory improvement only for the elderly?

What causes "memory loss?"

How to remember names and faces.

What about memorizing long numbers?

New theory - memory loss due to depression?

Is aspartame linked to memory loss?

How can we improve our memory?

What about "natural" remedies to boost the memory?

Foods to eat that boost memory.

Memory Illnesses - What are Alzheimer and Dementia?

Who gets memory illnesses?

How is Alzheimers treated?

What else can YOU do to improve your memory?

What happens to the brain as we age?

Gracefully Aging Your Brain

The brain is obviously one of the most important organs of our bodies. We use it all the time, but how often do we actually think about the wellness of our brain?

Staying fit seems to be a growing concern in these modern times. People want to age gracefully by keeping a healthy diet, exercising regularly and staying away from stress. People may not know it, but these practices, which are mostly done for physique, can actually help your brain age with grace.

When the Brain Grows Old

What happens to the brain as we grow old? The brain has the capability to continuously grow neurons, even in old age. However, as people get older, the brain takes a longer time to process the electrical response to a stimulus as proven empirically by Professor Walter R. Bixby of the University of Maryland and his research team.

Read more about dementia in an upcoming chapter.

Memory loss or just absentmindedness?

The Fine Line between Memory Loss and Absentmindedness

Car keys are missing, pens have disappeared, and deadlines were missed. Is this a cause of memory loss or absentmindedness? Is it leading to something more serious or just plain falling victim to today's fast changing world?

Memories are powerful images recollected by the mind from the past. However, critics describe memory as not literally taken from experience. An individual's personality, hopes, beliefs, and needs influence what the past means for each of us. It is for this reason that forgetting the bits and pieces of the past or some information can be attributed to a person's capacity to be focused.

There are two sides that actually dispute and bring together studies and explanations whether forgetfulness is a matter of memory loss or just simple absentmindedness. More often than not, people blame forgetting things to absentmindedness but this is not always the case.

Memory loss can affect any one, young or old, rich or poor, male or female, single or not. Professor Daniel Shacter of Harvard University identified 7 sins of memory, one of which is absentmindedness.

This type of being forgetful happens when an individual does not pay enough attention to things happening around him. Forgetting where eyeglasses were placed is because focusing where they were placed before hand was not established; hence, the brain did not securely register the information. In other words you did not consciously instruct your brain to remember where you placed them.

Absentmindedness also involves being not focused on certain cues or hints that are essential to remind a person for example when to take pills or meet someone for lunch.

The doctor could have specifically instructed the patient to take the medicine after dinner but absentminded, forgot to do so. That is because the patient did not pay close attention to the cue word: dinner. Having dessert or watching TV could serve as hints that dinner has ended so taking the medicine is next.

Psychology critics say that absentmindedness is a sin or omitting valid information. It is a breakdown of elements between memory and special attention. When a person is preoccupied with many things, he gets distracted and does not focus on things that need to be remembered.

According to Dr. Shacter, "Usually when you are being absentminded, it's that your conscious processing is focused on something other than the task at hand; you are thinking about something else."

One of his famous examples is the story about YoYo Ma, the cellist. Wherein this man gets inside the taxi in New York City and places his \$2.5 Million cello in the trunk. He pays the taxi driver upon arriving to his destination, gets out, walks away, but leaving the \$2.5 Million cello in the trunk. This situation, according to Schacter, is "a failure of attention at the time when memory retrieval is necessary."

Another expert who is currently with the St. Louis University School of Medicine, Geriatric Psychiatry Director, Dr. George T. Grossberg, shares the same sentiments with Dr. Schacter. He said that people now live in a multitasking world, "Many people just have sensory overload, wherein they have too many things going on at once, making them more likely to be absentminded." It becomes a behavior developed through life changing processes. Tasks are forgotten since people have to deal with heavy schedules. Absentmindedness happens when people age and get busier with their work and family.

Absentmindedness is totally different from having memory loss says Grossberg. He shared a story about one his patients, who was taken to him by her family due to severe forgetfulness. The family was alarmed when they started receiving calls from restaurants, department stores, coffee shops and other establishments telling them that the patient has left her wallet, bag or other important things.

Worry should start when a person begins forgetting things that just previously happened. This may be stored information not just material things that can't be recalled. An absent minded person may forget where the car keys have been placed, while a person having memory loss forgets where he placed the car keys, won't even realize they are lost and will eventually forget what those keys are for.

Individuals who forget things and start losing track of information of the past may change drastically. It would start with their day to day activities and eventually could affect their analytical and planning skills. In time it would change their manners of speaking, writing and comprehension. Unlike absentminded people, they may forget simple things and appointments but it never alleviates their capacity to run things successfully in their lives. Therein, is the difference between memory loss and absentmindedness.

Is memory improvement only for the elderly?

Memory Improvement Is Not Just An Elderly Thing

Normally, the brain's capacity to store and retrieve information wanes as brain cells deteriorate through time. Other factors such as Alzheimer's disease, dementia or other diseases related to aging also affect the capacity of the brain to remember. But these reasons are not enough to conclude that memory improvement is only advised and recommended for the elderly.

Regardless of age, human beings rely on recalled information to get by everyday. Even at an early age, kids utilize information as part of the learning process. It may be as simple as learning how to tie shoelaces on his own, remembering what needs to be done in case he finds himself separated from his family in malls, learning numbers and the alphabet, and remembering the names of persons close to him. A lot of things learned at this period become integral to the life of a growing child and is referred to in the following years.

As kids continue studying, a number of things add to the list of what is needed to be remembered. Students need to refer to a lot of notes and lectures for these. Understanding complex lessons is a hard task. But to accurately remember these ideas involves even greater efforts. During examinations, what is retained in the minds of the students becomes the gauge of what he has become. What a student remembers from his educational endeavor, will have to be recalled the moment he is absorbed in the workplace.

Adding to the complexity of life are more things for an adult to keep in mind. There are bills, PIN codes, household matters, events, work matters, etc. The list of things to remember goes on. And as long as life continues, the list will not cease to expand. Knowing that all things are intertwined, there is no room for mistakes caused by forgetting.

It can be generalized then that the series of human activities strongly rely on the ability to recall and apply what has been learned in the past. And that is what memory is basically all about. Memory then can be defined as the ability to retain or preserve knowledge. More so, memory has a lot to do with how a person functions independently and successfully.

Unfortunately, in as much as people are faced with the fact that memory is important in our daily lives, they might as well be open to the fact that people do experience memory loss. This may be due to normal forgetting, or as part of the system to psychologically respond to negative situations such as fear or trauma, or because of the complex organization of information to short-term and long-term memory.

One may also find that the discrepancy between the visual and verbal means of acquiring information affects our memory. Studies have shown

that tending to learn through visual mode more (i.e. television shows, movies/documentaries) makes one's right side brain develop more than the left side, thus affecting information recall.

Acknowledging these facts will lead to understanding that memory improvement is not for the elderly alone.

- It is for people who want to maximize their learning.
- It is for people who want to make the most of what they have learned.
- It is for people who have the will to be more than just someone who has average memory.
- It is for people who want to use memory to their advantage.

Elderly people benefit from memory improvements by having them live as they did before memory loss and it is thought that this can help to slow memory decline.

Then think of what memory improvement can do to a mind that has not reached the gray years. There are a lot of ways by which one can improve their memory nowadays. These are available to practically anyone who seeks the advantages of a powerful memory. The promise of something better is at the hands of those who want to improve.

Truly, knowledge is power. But greater power comes from what is retained in the mind. It is not enough to get facts. The next important thing is to know how to properly store them in your "mental database" for future reference and use. The brain is such a marvel, and its limitation depends solely on the limitations that its owners set forth. There are infinite possibilities for a brain that knows the right strategy.

What causes "memory loss?"

As we go about our daily lives, we tend to forget things like names of people whom we've met at one point in our lives, the location of a restaurant or our car keys or that certain word that is at the tip of our tongues. This is considered to be normal since our brain cannot accommodate all the information that it is fed. However, when memory loss becomes a deterrent to us in living our daily lives, then we are faced with a serious problem. The kind of memory loss that involves the information necessary for us to normally function needs medical attention.

There are many factors that are associated to cause memory loss. Listed below are some of the most common causes:

Aging

Aging is considered as one of the most common causes of memory loss. A person starts to lose brain cells at 20 but only a few at a time. The body also lessens the production of chemicals which are needed by the brain cells in order for them to work. Age-related memory loss equates to a deficiency of neurotransmitters that are the brain's chemical messengers. The older one gets, the greater the acceleration of this process. In fact, around 10% of all people above 70 years have severe memory problems.

Alzheimer's Disease

There are many causes other than aging which can cause memory problems. Alzheimer's disease is one of the most feared memory dysfunctions known to man since its cause is still unknown. It is a form of progressive dementia which impairs the intellectual functions of the brain including memory retention. In America alone, around 4 million have fallen victims to the dreaded disease. Half of all the people who have memory problems suffer from Alzheimer's disease. More information is covered on this dreaded disease in an upcoming chapter.

Head Injury

A head injury is defined as any trauma which leads to the injury of the skull, brain or scalp. This includes minor injuries such as a head bump and major brain injuries.

Severe head injuries can lead to problems of memory loss. Approximately 2 million people suffer from head injuries each year. Fast first aid treatment can improve the chances of saving life of someone together with keeping his memory intact.

Seizures

A seizure is defined as a violent and uncontrollable muscle contraction. Sometimes, seizures can just be a blanking out suddenly.

Medical Conditions

There are other medical conditions that can lead to memory loss. Cardiac problems such as coronary artery disease, arrhythmias and heart failure are some of the culprits. The reduced blood circulation can have a detrimental effect to the brain.

Kidney and liver failures are also associated with memory loss. These are conditions which increase the concentration of toxins in the blood.

Malnutrition and deficiencies in vitamins can also cause memory loss. Sometimes, these conditions are brought about by other problems such as alcoholism. This is also referred to as the Wernicke-Korsakoff Syndrome.

Taking too much medication is a common cause of memory loss. Overdosing usually leads to an altered state of mind and confusion.

Maintaining Memory

There are many ways in which we can maintain our memory functions. Living a healthy life and keeping a fit body can greatly improve our chances against memory loss. The brain needs to be constantly challenged by learning new things. That is why engaging in new activities and doing new things will help the brain maintain its vigor and sharpness. Staying away from stress and doing fun activities will also help the brain function at its best.

You can also try taking herbal medicine as a supplement that can help you maintain the wellness of your brain. The Siberian Ginseng is known to help in memory restoration. Gingko is popular in helping people with dementia. The Maca Root is rich in vitamins and minerals which are much needed by the brain, such as vitamins B1, B2, B12, C and E. Another root known as Kava is clinically proven to have comparable effects with those of anxiety drugs.

We can never underestimate the problem of memory loss. We may have a sharp mind today but we may never know what we will face as we grow older. We seldom think about the organ which allows us to enjoy life as we know it. Memories are prints of our lives which are too precious to be lost, let us take care of them.

How to remember names and faces

Best Techniques to Remember Names and Faces

Lost for words when faced with a familiar face not seen for ages? Changing your path to the checkout line to avoid the cheerleader from high school, whose name is not quite coming up? Avoid situations like these from now on. Be sure to try and follow the techniques below to help you remember names and faces.

- Listen carefully to the name of the person and politely ask to repeat if the name is not clear to you. Repeat the name to yourself several times.

- If handed a name card, read the name to yourself aloud, one or two times. The mind remembers better when the sound heard is familiar, such as one's voice.

- While you are conversing with the person, keep the name card in front of you during the entire conversation, so that you can refer to it from time to time until you can easily recall the name of the person.

- Recall a friend or relative that shares the same name. You can mention how you are familiar with your acquaintance's name by virtue of a friend or relative that shares the same name.

- As you recall your friend or relative with the same name, try to make a mental association between the two. Now this can be done in the beginning of the conversation, when there is something physical or immediately obvious characteristic that is common. Or it can be towards the middle or end of the conversation, where you find out more about your acquaintance, be it their occupation (John the lawyer, same as your lawyer) or a striking characteristic (Ana is as talkative as your niece, also named Ana).

- If you are familiar with the etymology or origin of the name (for non-English names) mention that as well and spend sometime elaborating on it. You'll be surprised at how most people are not familiar with such trivia.

- As you get into the thick of things, remember to use the name of your new friend as often as possible, listening to yourself as you repeat it.

- From their physical appearance, create a mental picture of the one thing that stands out about the person. For example, Sarah has short hair, and then you can mentally remember, bob-cut Sarah. Or if Bill has a prominent nose, then imagine a big nose and remember Bill. If Fred was wearing red, then remember Red Fred.

- If humor works for you, exaggerate anything that will help you remember the person, such as Cathy who maybe wearing a safari scarf can be remembered as Tiger Cathy. Or if Samantha is wearing pink that day, then

make a mental picture of Samantha as a Flamingo.

- Ask as much information about the person as you can. If from a different state, then use the State abbreviation to correlate with their first name. Hannah from California can be remembered as Hannah CA, or Aaron from Arizona can be remembered as AA from AZ.

- What are their interests? What sport do they play? What is their job? In answering any of those questions, one of the replies will stand out and will make yourself be more familiar with the person in front of you.

- If you have access to a digital camera or a mobile phone with a digital camera, then snap one with your new friend. The picture need not be the most photogenic for both of you, just a sure way to keep a remembrance of the meeting.

- When ending the conversation, make sure to repeat the name of the new friend for as often as possible. Recall one or two points in the conversation that you will never forget and make a testament about him or her on those points, before you part.

- Immediately after meeting the person, try to jot down whatever transpired through the concluded conversation: where you met, how, why and the specifics of your conversation. Try to keep that note in a scrapbook of small notes about acquaintances.

- Better still, at the end of each day, jot down specific highlights of your day in a journal, especially when meeting someone and you are sure to keep the acquaintance forever.

The next time you attend a high school re-union, or bump into an old friend at the mall, don't be at a loss ... snappily call them out and rekindle friendships that were almost lost but are now found and remembered, forever!

What about memorizing long numbers?

Memorizing Long Numbers is as easy as One, Two, and Three.

Did you fail Math because you forgot to memorize the consonant pi? Did you ever cause a long line at the “New Accounts” lane looking for your Social Security Number? If you think that your memory needs major work, don't lose hope. Just remember these three ways you can use to memorize long numbers.

One: Major System

The first and most common way to memorize long numbers is called the Major System. The system works by memorizing words and phrases instead of the numbers themselves. As such, words and phrases are easier to remember and recalled.

The words or phrases are formed by combining vowels and consonants that stand-in for each digit in the number series. Each number, from 0 to 10 is assigned a consonant. It is not an exact letter-to-number correspondence but more of letter-to-consonant sound correspondence (phonetic). Below is the mapping:

0 is substituted with “s, z”

1 is substituted with “d, t or th”

2 is substituted with “n, ing”

3 is substituted with “m”

4 is substituted with “r”

5 is substituted with “l”

6 is substituted with “j, sh, ch, zh”

7 is substituted with “k, hard g”

8 is substituted with “f, v”

9 is substituted with “b, p”

After substituting each number with the consonant, fill in between with vowels to create a familiar word or phrase that makes sense and thus can be easily remembered.

For example, in remembering when the Gettysburg Address was delivered (11-19-1863), substitute the numbers with consonants as suggested by the Major System:

1 is substituted with "t" or "th", so 11 is substituted the word "that"

9 is substituted with "b", so 19 is "t" & "p" or form the word "top"

8 is substituted with "v", 6 with "g" and 3 with "m", so 1863 is "t", "v", "g" & "m" or form the phrase "tv gem"

So, to remember the date, just remember the phrase "That top TV gem" and recall 11-19-1863.

Now practice using your Social Security Number and create words and phrases that are significant to you, ones that you can easily recall, the next time you fill up that form.

Such a system is also very useful for memorizing phone numbers or zip codes. Just create word sequences that are relevant to the area being remembered.

Two: Edwards System

Not entirely different from the Major System, the Edwards system also substitutes digits with words, but more with famous people, who are easier to recall. Instead of single digits, the Edwards system uses double digits for association with people's initials or famous characters.

To use the system, map the numbers 00 through 99. Correlate famous characters or initials to each pair like associate 07 for James Bond (007), 08 for Kobe Bryant (8), 23 for Michael Jordan, 33 for Larry Bird. If you are lost for famous people associated with numbers, use the Major system to come up with initials for the number pair, like GB for 79, so remember George Bush; SD (Saddam) for 01; SN (Hussein) for 02.

After mapping, break the number series to be remembered into pairs and memorize a series of famous characters or make them interact for a lasting and entertaining memorization.

Three: Grouping System

For mathematical consonants like pi and the Euler's consonants (e), using the Major system or Edwards's system may not work. The word and phrase combination for the number series may not make perfect sense, thus maybe difficult to remember. Instead, some Mathematicians have devised a way to group the numbers into shorter series and to associate them with whatever can help remember the sequence.

For example, first 16 digits of Euler's consonant are 2.718281828459045. By using the Major System, one can come up with a phrase for it such as "NeGaTiVe iNnoVaTiVe uNFuRL BiZaRreLy ". The capitalized letters would represent consonants substituted for the digits, as per the number system, but the whole phrase may not make such perfect sense.

So, for some Mathematicians, they have devised a way of grouping the numbers together this way:

2.7: the standard approximation of e

1828: a leap year or the year when President Andrew Jackson won the elections

1828: repeat of the year

45-90-45: cut a square in half to get a triangle with these angles

Now ace that Math test, or go through lines in a breeze by memorizing long numbers easily. Who knows, you may just predict the next Lotto series jackpot!

New theory - memory loss due to depression?

Fight Depression and Recover your Memory Loss

During the course of one's lifetime, it is a common understanding that as one ages, memory deteriorates. It is a fact of life, an event that is waiting to happen, and for those approaching past the middle years, is a dreadful outcome of what was once a dependable data bank.

Alzheimer's may be waiting round the bend, for if we let history take its course, 10% of today's middle-aged American will be experiencing memory loss in 10-15 years as part of the aging process.

But recent studies have shown that memory loss in adults may not always be equal to having Alzheimer's. There are at least four other possible causes for difficulty in remembering:

Loss of hearing:

As one ages, and depending on how one has lived his or her life, (excessive exposure to loud music, work-related noise or one-time exposure to extremely damaging loud noise), deafness can develop. Thus, the elderly may develop difficulty in hearing and in differentiating speech, which results in giving wrong answers to questions.

Loss of focus: When you are used to doing several things at the same time, such ability can diminish as one ages. One can forget some details, while concentrating on doing other things such as watching TV or listening to the radio. Such memory loss is just due to the reduced ability to multitask and definitely not Alzheimer's.

Longer recall times: First dates, first car, and first love ... those experiences should be quite unforgettable, but when they are piled deep into the brain's archives, they may be difficult to instantly remember. This is certainly not Alzheimer's, but just longer time that the brain recalls and

goes through its archives, searching for information through years and years of data.

Depression: The last and possible cause of memory loss is depression. When one is depressed, there is fundamental lack of concentration because whatever is making the person depressed, takes up the entirety of one's focus. As we age, we can develop anxiety due to the fear of weakness, loss of control and death. This anxiety may lead to depression and as such, may exhibit loss of memory, thought to be signs of Alzheimer's.

Just recently, the Memory Disorders Clinic of the Medical College of Wisconsin and the Marquette University School of Nursing discovered that depression was the cause of memory problems of senior citizens and not Alzheimer's.


Dr. Piero G. Antuono, professor of neurology at Medical College of Wisconsin, who practices at Froedtert Hospital conducted a test by screening 67 seniors. Twenty-eight of the respondents said they were anxious about their memory, but only 4 were found to be of actual decreased memory based on standardized tests.

Furthermore, all but one of the 28 scored high in the depression test. According to Dr. Antuono, the results of the clinical test showed that memory loss may be tied to anxiety and depression. If the depression is addressed, the memory issue may be addressed as well.

In addition, he noted that the test has shown that if one has a memory problem, especially senior citizens, the symptom may not lead to Alzheimer's disease. He made an analogy to having a severe headache, which when it manifests, is very seldom a sign that one has a brain tumor.

As the best physicians would recommend, consult your general practitioner for symptoms of depression, when memory loss manifests. You may observe the following as signs of depression:

- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" moods
- A loss of interest or pleasure in activities, including sex
- Restlessness, irritability, or excessive crying
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness, hopelessness, pessimism
- Sleeping too much or too little, early morning awakening
- Appetite and/or weight loss or overeating and weight gain
- Decreased energy, fatigue, feeling "slowed down"



-Thoughts of death or suicide or suicide attempts

-Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions

-Persistent physical symptoms that don't respond to treatment such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain

If you or your loved one displays memory loss together with one or all of the symptoms above, do not immediately conclude Alzheimer's disease. Have an assessment of your brain and memory function. Changes in lifestyle, environment or a healthy diet may just do the trick against depression, and get one's memory, back on track.

Is aspartame linked to memory loss?

Aspartame causes memory loss, death

Jessica just finished her third can of diet soda. Because of work pressure, she also consumes not less than three cups of coffee per day. But nothing to worry, she tells herself, as she consumes everything that's sugar free. As a diet-conscious career woman, she relies on diet coke, artificial sugar sweeteners like Equal and other diet crackers and gums.

If you are a diet freak like Jessica and you consume various diet products every day, then watch out; you may have started suffering from memory loss. Worse, you may have been placed in the world's longest death list.

The majority of the diet products you consume contain aspartame, an artificial sweetener which is 200 times sweeter than sugar, and can be found in over 9,000 food products. It was approved as a food additive in 1981 and for use in diet sodas in 1983. It is present in frozen desserts, diet sodas, coffee, and juices and even in vitamins.

Aspartame is 50% phenylalanine, 40% aspartic acid and 10% methanol. Studies have shown that the components of aspartame are deadly. When stored for a long period, phenylalanine decomposes into diketopiperazine, a known carcinogen. Aspartic was used in an experiment, and was found to have caused holes in the brains of mice. Methanol, on the other hand, is a toxin which, when stored in cool temperature, gives rise to formaldehyde in the body. Formaldehyde, in layman's term, is the fluid used for embalming dead people. Picture that in your system, if you are an aspartame user.

There are two schools of thought on the effects of the contents of aspartame. Pro-aspartame doctors say that the ingredients of aspartame are safe. However, anti-aspartame scientists claim that phenylalanine can be harmless only when taken with other substances containing amino acids. If taken alone, it has neurotoxic effects which cause memory loss, seizures, headaches, and stomach disorders.

But not all aspartame users die immediately. They suffer. The Environmental Protection Agency said aspartame, which is absorbed in the blood as methanol, is safe provided the consumption does not exceed a minimum amount per day. The bad news: a liter of diet soda, containing aspartame, can contain as much as 56 milligram of methanol, way beyond the minimum safe level. Add to that the various diet products with aspartame which you consume daily and you have a toxic cocktail!

Too much aspartame in the brain kills neurons that's why they are called excitotoxins---they excite the brain cells to death. Imagine what would happen to your memory if most of the brain cells used to store them are killed by aspartame.

Experts say aspartame is dangerous per se but it is more hazardous to those who have diabetes and hypertension, those who smoke, infants, pregnant women and those who are breastfeeding. Experts also claim that continued use of aspartame may cause multiple sclerosis, birth defects, mental retardation and diabetes.

But why is aspartame so widely-used despite the dangerous contents? Majority of the people believe that since it has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration, then it is safe. Other groups like the FDA and the American Council on Science and Health deny the alleged adverse effects of aspartame and claim that it is one of the most thoroughly-tested drugs in the United States. Anti-aspartame groups are, however, questioning the approval of the substance, despite the prior eight-year approval suspension because of the adverse effects of aspartame.

The warning issued against the use of aspartame products fell on deaf ears, particularly for those who are diet conscious as they believe that diet products containing aspartame can control weight.

Experts however claim the contrary, saying aspartame can cause weight gain because two of its components, phenylalanine and aspartic acid, encourage the release of insulin. The release of insulin in the bloodstream however removes all the glucose, thereby causing sugar cravings.

Imagine how exposed everyone is to aspartame-containing products. Equal (sugar substitute particularly used by those who have diabetes) is regularly served by hotels and restaurants for coffee drinkers. Aspartame is even found in juices and jellies that you buy for your children.

While there are two sides to the issue about aspartame, what would it hurt the owners Monsanto, if they have the substance re-tested to quell the increasing fears about the product?

How can we improve our memory?

Tips on improving your memory

Have you ever castigated yourself for failing to remember almost everything that would have made your life better? Like that one occasion when you just stared at your boss' wife while she was talking to you, just because you forgot that she was the Number One man's wife? This cost you your promotion and would have caused you your job if not for some saving graces like your former job performance rate.

Or what about that day when you were supposed to make a product presentation to a very important client but you forgot all about it and took a leave of absence? Luckily, your client called up your office to cancel the appointment because she was sick.

But don't kill yourself first. You're not getting dumber or older; it's just that you have failed to develop good memory skills that would have made you remember these things. As experts say, there is no good or bad memory; only unorganized thoughts.

A poor memory is equal to poor recollection of things. If you keep forgetting things, then don't blame your memory because it's not the culprit. What you should blame is the little or lack of attention you place on things.


Most people, at one time or another, have experienced memory loss. It is synonymous with forgetfulness or what others refer to as being scatterbrained. To solve this problem, you have to realize that your inability to recall is caused by other things like retention problems, being overworked, information overload and stress.

There are people who are plain slow in recalling things, not because they are stupid but because they do not practice their recalling skills. It's all a matter of getting the right skills for recollection.

A person who is overworked is also prone to forgetting things, particularly trivial things that may be related or unrelated to their work. Because of too much work, you have no choice but to focus your attention on more important things like the work at hand.

The media revolution is responsible for bombarding us with information. Often, people get information overload. There's just too much information going on in our heads that we tend to forget the things that matter most.

There are several things we encounter in our daily lives that are called memory tasks. Among these are names (of family and friends, of people we meet and of people we do business with), birthdays, dates (like when do we have to go to the doctor for check up), anniversaries and phone numbers.




A good memory will help improve your status in life. It will come in handy both in your personal life and in your business dealings. Do you know that most successful people are the ones who can easily remember things like names?

And yet, a name is one thing that we always forget. Remembering names is one of the most important assets we can have, whatever job we are in. It may be a cliché but it is true that his or her name is the sweetest word that can be said to a person. Experiment on this by asking for the names of salesladies, or the doctor's secretary and then call them by their first names. The next time you visit them, you will surely be treated like a friend.

To be good in recalling names, listen attentively whenever a person is introduced to you. Then repeat his or her name, and mentally connect the person's name to an object or event familiar to you. Link the name to a funny thing or event, the better the chances of recall.

We discussed ways to improve your memory in previous chapters, however this is another tactic that is a bit different. This strategy for recalling information is through the use of "mnemonics." Mnemonics is a memory tool or device that aids the memory in recalling information. Mnemonics can be used through our imagination. It means associating things by its size, shape, color or smell. You can also create your own mnemonics by connecting and clashing images in your mind.

If you often forget numbers like your bank account, then it would be best to create a mnemonic for it. Associate the numbers of your bank account with numbers that are significant to you life. Like if the first numbers of your bank account is 05993, and you happen to be born in May, then you can remember the first two numbers by associating it with your month of birth. The double nine is easier to associate with nine twins, and three with your house number.



What about "natural" remedies to boost the memory?

Natural remedies to boost your memory

Everyone from whatever part of the globe is faced with information overload, brought about by bombardment from all forms of media. Even those who live in remote areas are not exempted, for as long as they are reached by newspapers or by television. Even the information coming from the community members are so diverse that anyone can get information overload at one time or another.

This situation has caused a strain to the memory, forcing the memory to be selective as to the information it would have to process and to store. The various information you are faced with make you susceptible to forgetfulness. Because, of this, you must find ways to continuously boost your memory, either by training your memory to remember information whenever you need it, or by resorting to natural memory boosters.

Of course, you can always attend a memory-building class or buy self-help books on boosting your memory. But wouldn't it be better if we can do that and at the same time, make sure we are physically fit by eating the right kind of food?


One of the most natural ways to keep your memory sharp is by making sure you are physically fit. If you are able to do so, subject yourself to a yearly physical check up. This way, you will not only know your body's over all make-up, but it will also assure you that you are physically fit.

There is really no such thing as a good or bad memory. People who often forget things are bound to be suffering from a certain illness, or are stressed and overworked. By making sure that your body is free from these conditions, you are already on your way to improving your memory.

Of course, poor memory is said to be normal as people become older. Couple age with lack of exercise, an unhealthy lifestyle and diet, and you get very poor memory. However, there are older people who have very good memories. It's either they take good care of themselves, or they have learned the art of improving their memory as they grow older.

Most often, people who are inactive are the ones who feel greater memory loss. The more you keep your mind idle, the more your memory will lose track of all the information it has gathered throughout the years. Drinking and smoking have also been linked with poor memory.

The busy lives we lead can be blamed for the quality of food we eat. Look around your pantry and you will see more processed food than natural food. Even the fish, meat and vegetables we eat today are pre-cooked and frozen so that busy people can just stick it in their microwaves. Rare are the days when a family living in an urban area, can eat fresh fish, meat and vegetables.



Other people who suffer from weak memory opt to take herbal medicines like ginseng. Ginseng, which has been popular in China for a long time, has become a hit among people from all walks of life, because of its healing effect in some diseases. It is also being used to treat Alzheimer's disease and other neurological diseases.

Ginseng has been recommended as a natural memory booster and relaxant for those who are overworked and who stimulate their senses by drinking too much coffee. It is also known to be a natural stress reliever. We discuss more on Ginseng later.

Others believe that eating fish rich with oils can also help the system rid itself of toxins and improve alertness. Experts also recommend taking essential fatty acids, B Complex Vitamins and Amino Acids to aid one's memory.

So what is it in fish that makes it a food for the brain? Fish has a high choline content, a chemical from which acetylcholine is derived. Acetylcholine is considered as the top chemical that aids the memory. Aside from that, choline is also an important ingredient for building nerve cells. The other food products rich in choline are eggs, liver and nuts. Believe your elders when they say that eating peanuts can make you intelligent; after all, it is a rich source of choline.

Eating complex carbohydrates such as whole-wheat bread and pasta is also good for the brain. These carbohydrates are ideal because their energy-giving glucose is slowly and consistently released into the bloodstream. You can also make sure that you eat slow-release carbohydrates by eating them together with a protein-rich food like chicken and boiled potatoes or fish and whole-grained rice.

Foods to eat that boost memory.

Food for Memory Enhancement

There are times when it's difficult to concentrate on studies or even at work. Though it is a cliché to hear people saying eat the right food to increase brainpower, chances are they're true. It's just a matter of finding the right food supplement and eating a balanced diet together with a healthy lifestyle. And that means no smoking, sleeping early, with regular body exercise. These factors contribute a lot to boosting the brain's power to perform effectively.

When looking for the right food that could increase memory, try the following organic and natural foods and even food supplements that are helpful. Studies show that by using the Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging tool, researchers were able to test the brain's capability to retain memory with the help of different food groups as subjects.


Oily fish - Moms are actually right about the idea of telling their kids that eating fresh cooked fish make kids really smart. Examples of fish usually being forced to eat by kids are sardines, salmon, herring, or mackerel etc., are rich in omega 3 fatty acids. Tuna for instance is composed of good fatty acids that are needed by the cells of the brain to be more powerful and improve memory. Aside from omega 3, some sardines have nutrient called choline, which is a chemical of the brain that is very important for memory.

Soy - Protein in food boosts the brain cells in transmitting information to the brain for added memory power. Soy has this benefit of pure form of nutrient that is extracted from soybeans. Because the protein coming from it is isolate it can be found in supplements may it be in powder or liquid form. Soy can also be found in supplements rich in isoflavone, especially soymilk. This is effective for verbal and visual memory that also contributes to mind flexibility.

Eggs - Some still take this idea for granted, but the brain must be provided with essential fats. Good fatty acids must be derived from healthy foods like eggs since the body does not produce this naturally.

Ginkgo biloba - This is widely used in the Eastern part of the world for thousands of years now and most well known as the most effective cure for memory deficiency. It helps increase blood circulation in the brain and helps increase the supply of oxygen to it. It is a wonderful compound but do not assume instant effects for it could take three to four weeks before the results can be felt. And because it eliminates free radicals in the brain, it also helps in preventing any damages in the brain cells.

Rosemary - This special herb minimizes brain fatigue and recent clinical studies show that it can boost the memory up to 18%. Another organic plant that helps in transmitting messages to brain cells is Sage. This herb maximizes the level of chemicals in the brain that act as stimulants to brain retrieval.




Many people may take this for granted but "Water" is one of the most important elements in keeping a healthy brain, thus, contributing to a good memory. The human brain is composed of 70% water. The more it is hydrated, the more it functions to the highest level. When it becomes dehydrated, it could produce cortisol, a hormone that alleviates the capacity of the brain to store information.

Iron rich foods help people to concentrate and increase brainpower. Clinical studies also show that iron could develop an individual's span of attention. This can either be taken in supplements or in beans, lean meats, seafood and iron fortified snacks. Taking vitamin C supplements or citrus fruits aids the body in absorbing all the iron taken in each meal.

In the market today, many American tested brain boosting food supplements are endorsed to the public. In general Vitamin B complex supplements resulted as one of the most promising in alleviating mental and physical stress. It helps ensure acetylcholine activity, which is an important chemical for the brain's memory function. Vitamin B at the same time carries oxygen to the brain, which helps prevent free radicals from damaging the system. If supplements are not available, eggs, liver, soybeans, tofu food, green beans, and lentils can be found everywhere.

These entire brainpower building foods can be found daily, just make sure to have them included in the daily diet. Doctors' advice: have an egg for breakfast, green or black tea during lunch, with sage in pasta sauce at dinner, and 6 to 8 glasses of water the whole day, can make each person feel like Einstein.



Memory Illnesses - What are Alzheimer's and Dementia?

Dementia and Alzheimer's

Mother Nature has a way of making sure we know when we're growing old. As a person ages, symptoms of old age slowly appear, both physiological and psychological.

Physical symptoms of old age include loss of hearing, slowness of movement, the onset of arthritis like stiffness of joints and muscles, blurring of sight, impairment of taste, loss of teeth, erectile dysfunction, dryness of skin, etc.

Though the physical aspect of old age is an important issue and needs to be addressed, an even larger concern should be placed in the psychological state of elderly people. It is in this area that people in their old age suffer the most, significantly affecting their families, loved ones, and close friends.

In old age, mental issues are the most pronounced. It is mostly caused by the environment, the way the person had been living in his younger years, as well as genetics. One of the most observed mental disorders seen among the elderly is dementia.

Dementia is defined as a gradual degradation in cognitive function beyond the cycle of normal aging. The signs of dementia include differentiation in personality or behavior, degradation in memory, attention, comprehension and expression of language, and resolution of problems, among a few.

Symptoms can be characterized as curable and incurable. Usually, dementia symptoms are complicated by the onset of other effects such as delusions, delirium, depression, and other mental disorders.

To properly diagnose its symptoms, dementia is subjected to rigorous testing developed over the years to detect and classify a patient's mental illness. These tests are the ABMTS or Abbreviated Mental Test Score and the MMSE or Mini Mental State Examination. Coupled with other physical and mental tests, psychiatrists make the final decision on a patient through looking at the overall clinical picture of his mental state.

The most common form of dementia found in the elderly is Alzheimer's disease. This mental illness primarily affects the memory of the elderly. As the disease progresses, its symptoms will include the loss of language comprehension, coordination, recognition and problem solving abilities.

Complicating Alzheimer's will also see the inclusion of behavioral changes like anger, violence, denial, total passivity, depression and such.

Biologically, Alzheimer's disease is found to be caused by the rapid

decrease or neurons to the brain which results in atrophy. The causes have been primarily genetic in nature and there has been no known cure for it, although progress on delaying its onset has been marginally successful.

Attempts at total prevention of Alzheimer's disease have so far been elusive. There is no proven way to detect the mental disorder before its onset, which makes it difficult. DNA testing is possible but expensive to execute. The common denominator for its appearance in the elderly has always been age.

To increase the possibility of prevention, studies have shown that people who use their minds more often have a less likelihood of contracting the disease compared to others who do not.

The game of chess stood out as the greatest method of prevention compared to solving crossword puzzles and dancing.

Furthermore, other studies have shown that activities that prevent the onset of cardiac arrest and stroke made great progress in finding less occurrences of Alzheimer's in patients. Special mention has to be given to the subject of dancing.

Dancing has been found in another study to have made very significant strides on making Alzheimer's less likely to occur in the elderly due to the requirement of dance to integrate coordination of the mind and body.

Consumption of vitamins C and E has also been seen to affect Alzheimer's prevention greatly. Studies show it has an 80% chance of preventing Alzheimer's onset only if the dosage was at least 400 IU for vitamin E and 500 IU of vitamin C per day. This is much less than the daily dose offered by multivitamins in the market today.

Vitamins E and C must be taken in tandem to be effective. Consumption of vitamin E only slightly improves the chance of prevention while a large dose of vitamin C only has no effect. Vitamin E in large doses also poses a health risk to patients due to its ability to be active in the presence of free radicals. The presence of vitamin C, an antioxidant, makes the dosage safe to use.

Lifestyle changes that prevent the appearance of Alzheimer's disease include quitting smoking, weight reduction, and insulin regulation.

Who gets memory illnesses?

Memory: Fragile and priceless

A person's last bastion of privacy is the privacy of his own mind. Take away all the freedom a person has and lock him up. Put that person under surveillance round the clock, and you'll still have no idea what he is thinking.

That person may be thinking about home, or his loved ones, or the people who put him in chains. Thanks to his memories.

Memory is the ability of an individual to store, maintain and retrieve information from the mind. There are different types of memory: sensory, short-term and long-term memory.

Sensory memory is the initial moment or situation that is felt. This memory is then immediately placed into short-term memory. Short-term memory is characterized as volatile. The duration by which a person will remember in short-term memory is only limited and temporary unless measures are taken to consistently introduce the memory into long-term memory.

Long-term memory is where general and historical events are stored. It is further divided into two kinds: declarative memory and procedural memory.

Declarative memory is memory that requires conscious effort to retrieve. Knowledge of semantics that require abstract knowledge, such as knowing what the capital of California is; and personal experience form this memory, such as remembering what it feels like to fall in love the first time.

Procedural memory is used to learn motor skills. This kind of memory takes advantage of the fact that the human body learns well only through repetition of an action.

In addition, there is a part of memory called working memory. When a mind is working on solving a complex problem and he needs to switch between calculations, the area where other data is stored is called working memory.

Memory has three stages: store, retain and retrieve. Any impairment to any one of the three stages caused the victim to have memory problems.

But memory loss strikes anybody at any age. It can be caused by a wide variety of external and internal factors.

- Age is the most well-known cause of memory loss. Old age causes the brain to produce less of the neurons that maintain memory. The elderly may have difficulty in recall or learning but this is not a problem

unless mental disorders are the cause.

- Dementia. As a person ages, his ability to retain memories is seen to erode and even fade away. This is even more pronounced in patients that contract mental disorders such as dementia.

The most common form of dementia is Alzheimer's disease. This mental illness has struck mostly people in their old age and is characterized by a gradual decline in memory as well as other functions such as learning, comprehending, communication, and such.

- Trauma involving the head. Studies show that accidents involving head trauma plays a part in the future loss of memory for its victims.

- Cardiac arrest. People with a history of heart attacks have a likelihood of contracting a memory illness in their advanced years. This may be caused by the inability of the heart to circulate blood throughout the body, which may cause the brain to have amyloid deposits.

- Stroke. Stroke victims also have a likelihood of a mental disorder in their old age as it affects the body's ability to filter toxins out of the body.

- Smoking. People who smoke have twice as many chances of memory loss due to the increase in production of free radicals in the body. Smoke inhalation also impedes the body's ability to combat other diseases and increases the likelihood of cancer.

- Alcoholism. People who excessively drink alcohol also stand a large chance of memory loss due to the same reasons above as smoking. Alcohol puts a large strain on the liver.

- Tumors. Growing tumors can cause pressure on parts of the brain, which bring about amnesia. Surgery usually can fix this problem, easing the pressure.

- Drug abuse. Chemical substance abuse has been well-documented in creating memory loss with its abusers in their advanced years, among other problems.

- Encephalitis. Illnesses transferred through bodily fluids can cause an infection to the brain that leaves them in a weakened state as the body battles to get rid of the infection. The most common form of encephalitis is Herpes simplex.

How is Alzheimers treated?

Fighting Alzheimer's Unstoppable March

Of the many kinds of dementia, Alzheimer's disease is the most commonly found mental disorder in the elderly. Person's aged over 65 have the most observed occurrence of the disease.

It is a mental disorder that is initially characterized by the gradual and significant loss of memory and progresses in its degradation to include the person's ability to reason, make judgments, learn, communicate and comprehend.

The loss of mental functions caused by Alzheimer's will prevent the patient to function properly and will require treatment and care until the end of their days.

Usually Alzheimer's disease is complicated by delusions, delirium, and other signs of dementia. Physiologically, the appearance of Alzheimer's is significant in people with diabetes, cardiac arrest and stroke, but even this mental disorder appears in people with no such medical history. People who do not use their minds more often also have a high chance of developing Alzheimer's in old age.

Biologically, under a microscope, genetic markers that show the possibility of Alzheimer's in a patient is the loss of neurons with an marked inability or decreased ability to replenish the supply. This causes loss of memory.

Furthermore, there will be signs of amyloid plaque and neurofibrillary tangles present. Debate rages on regarding where Alzheimer's disease takes root in a human being. Currently, two schools of thought have stood out in the field of this type of research among scientists.

First is the belief that an abnormality in the tau protein is the causes of imbalance. Second is the school that believes that the presence of amyloid deposits has something to do with Alzheimer's.

Recent studies have found more evidence in favor of the amyloid deposit theory with the research showing that the inability to transport beta amyloids out of the brain causes plaque buildup, increasing the likelihood of Alzheimer's. However, there is still no definite suspect on the cause of Alzheimer's.

Treatment of Alzheimer's disease is still ongoing. There is no cure as of this writing. Various methods have been devised to slow down its progress though.

The following substances have been found to make a significant contribution to the disease's regulation or the patient's comfort.

1. Antioxidants. The presence of large amounts of free radicals in the body increases the risk of Alzheimer's. Daily consumption of vitamins E and C together has shown to contribute to the disorder's prevention.

Daily consumption must meet or exceed 400 IU of vitamin E and 500 IU of vitamin C. Anything less, or the vitamins are taken individually, makes it ineffective.

2. Sleep medication. Knowledge that one has Alzheimer's usually creates conditions of stress and anxiety to patients. It is not uncommon for patients to react with extreme anger, anxiety, and worse worry, causing insomnia.

Psychiatrists would usually recommend that patients who get depressed or extremely worried at night ingest sleep medication for the good of the patient's overall health.

3. Cholinesterase inhibitors. Patients diagnosed with Alzheimer's have been known to have little of the chemical acetylcholine, which sends messages to the brain. This affects the patient's memory and attention functions.

Cholinesterase inhibitors prevent the chemical acetylcholinesterase from breaking down what little acetylcholine is produced in the brain, improving the patient's attention and memory levels.

4. Memantine. The chemical glutamate is a substance in the brain that acts on receptor cells called NMDA. Excessive stimulation of the NMDA receptors is bad for the general health of the brain.


The application of memantine blocks the receptors from receiving glutamate and has been successful with patients experiencing moderate to severe Alzheimer's.

5. Antipsychotics. These substances help control the patient's bouts of mania, anger, fear, paranoia, delusions, hallucinations, etc. However, there have been observed side effects.

6. Antidepressants. These substances are recommended for patients experiencing the extreme lows of depression and despair. Side effects have also been observed.

Ultimately, the old adage of an ounce of prevention being better than a pound of cure is an advice worth more than its weight in gold.

Studies have shown that people with active mental and physical lifestyles have been found with a significantly less likelihood of Alzheimer's. Chess, crosswords, and dancing, among most activities studied, are recommended.



Prevention of heart diseases, stroke risk, abstinence from smoking, management of stress, the ability to cope with life, and living a balanced life is also recommended.

What else can YOU do to improve your memory?

Feed Your Brain!

It's so easy for us to write a note or a list to remind us of things that we have to do but what about the things we can't take note of? Like the great homily we'd like to share with our friends, or the funny thing that happened at work, or even the irritating waiter at the restaurant you had lunch in.

Wouldn't you like to recount these stories to your friends as if they were there themselves? But how can we share these stories to our friends if we can't remember the sequence of events, the characters and the lines?

Imagine saying: "Oh, she said something funny but I just can't remember what?!" Does that sound like something you'd say? If it does, then you need to start feeding your brain!

Improving memory and the ability to organize your thoughts can be thought of as a force multiplier. Memory is the ability of the brain to store, retain, and retrieve sensation and information. When one learns, it is thanks to memory that we don't have to relearn it day after day.

When you have a good memory, you spend less time figuring out things and have a system of keeping it all in the head. You become more efficient and effective at any task, thus improving quality of life.

As a person ages, it is believed that the ability to refresh the supply of neurons to the brain is diminished. This has the effect of memory loss. This can be preventive by taking up an actively physical and mental lifestyle.

Activities such as chess, dancing, and martial arts prevent the loss of memory partly due to activities' requirements of mental and physical coordination.

Accidents, personal lifestyle, upbringing, invasive surgery, trauma, genetics, the environment, society and training all play a part in the memory capacity of the individual. Mental disorders that affect memory loss are known as dementia.

The most common form of dementia among the elderly is Alzheimer's disease. This mental disorder is currently incurable and is characterized by the progressive onset of memory loss as well as other symptoms like loss of attention, learning, communication and problem-solving functions.

Feeding your brain will improve your memory. And it's as easy as one, two, three...

One: Feed your brain, literally. Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables sharpens the brain and improves memory. Some good brain boosters are blueberries, strawberries and spinach. They are rich in antioxidants that

help protect the brain cells and prevent the formation of blood clots.

Blood clots can slow down the neuron's response to chemical messengers this equals to slow memory. Start taking foods that have plenty of beta-carotene, vitamin C, folic acid, iron, zinc and B12 to help preserve memory.

Two: Mental gym. Exercise your brain by not using pen and paper, start memorizing your grocery list, learn the lyrics to your favorite song, or try reciting the multiplication table out loud. These little mental exercises help improve memory.

The Mnemonics that we discussed before are recommended as an aid to memory. As much as possible, the brain needs a pattern it can grasp to remember information by association. Try as much as possible to create visual and auditory cues as well to train yourself to remember.

Three: Focus. Concentrate. Stop multi-tasking and start focusing. How can we remember anything if we start to take everything in all at once? You and your brain can only do so much.

Slow down and start paying attention. Focus on the person you are talking to, concentrate on the article your reading, and you'll start remembering what you've heard and read.

Four: Repetition means retention. Learned a new word lately? Try repeating it out loud three to four times. Been introduced to someone? Try using his or her name (as many times as possible) immediately after the introduction, repeating a word or a name helps us commit it to memory.

More On Keeping Your Brain Healthy

Aging with grace should not only be seen in the context of having a great physique or a sexy body, although it has been found that keeping a healthy body is keeping a healthy mind. The human brain should also be stimulated and exercised so as to prevent its deterioration. Listed below are some tips in keeping your brain healthy.

Learn something new

Challenging the brain to learn new things will help it stay sharp and always active. Joining a tai chi club or enrolling on an arts course can really do your brain some good.

Go out of town

Traveling is a good form of stimulation for the human brain. It helps the brain experience new things and removes stress.

Exercise

Exercising gives protection to your brain and your mental processes. It also increases the supply of blood into the brain. A study was done involving 5,000 people who were over 65 years old and the results revealed that those who weren't involved in exercising were more prone to mental deterioration. Inactivity doubles the probability of the occurrence of Alzheimer's disease.

Make more friends

It wouldn't hurt if you meet other people and hang out a little bit, would it? Being with friends or acquaintances can be very beneficial to the brain. The brain is the organ which allows us to interact with the world, and that is precisely the reason why we have to use it to interact with other people.

Get enough sleep

Sleep is very important for the human brain. Sleep is the time when the brain recuperates.

Enjoy life

Stress relieving and engaging in fun activities are needed by the brain. Doing fun activities increases the chemicals that protect the brain from diseases.

The brain allows us to experience the world as humans and we owe it a lot. We have the responsibility of keeping our brain healthy and fit. It is at the top of our bodies for us to use it and to keep it that way. Aging gracefully is never going to be complete without a healthy and sound mind.