

Six Ways to Stop Memory Loss

Sponsored By

The food, supplement and exercise recommendations you should be following to keep your mind sharp.

By Temma Ehrenfeld

NEWSWEEK WEB EXCLUSIVE

Updated: 5:32 PM ET Jan 17, 2008

Forget about mind-blowing fun. Nowadays the kids who came of age in the '60s are turning 60. And they'd rather keep their minds intact, thank you. With that wave of elder boomers looming, scientists are hard at work on ways to prevent dementia and ordinary mental decline. The research is beginning to bear fruit: it's clear that a healthy lifestyle and mental exercise can measurably improve cognitive functioning. So the next time you hear yourself refer to "what's his name" or find yourself wandering a parking lot in search of your car, resolve to start a brain-fitness program. Here are six brain-sharpening recommendations that mindful folks of any age can follow. (Why not start early?)

1. Go Aerobic

More than 60 percent of seniors don't exercise, according to surveys by the Centers for Disease Control. That's a big mistake, since an impressive lineup of research suggests that exercise promotes new neurons in the hippocampus, the area of the brain responsible for some aspects of memory, and new connections between them. Neuroscientist Arthur Kramer and colleagues at the University of Illinois found that after only six months people over 60 who exercised three times a week for an hour had the brain volumes of people three years younger. In 2006 the Annals of Internal Medicine reported a six-year project involving 1,740 people 65 and up that linked even moderate exercise to reduced risk of dementia. So get your heart pumping so it brings more blood and oxygen to your brain.

2. Be a Player

Software has been used for years to help people who have suffered strokes or traumatic brain injuries regain specific mental abilities. Healthy folks have their choice of a host of products, including one, Posit Science's Brain Fitness Program, whose effectiveness is backed by a study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in 2006. Posit found that healthy people over the age of 60 tested about 10 years younger on standardized tests after using the product. Even [playing Sudoku helps keep your mind in shape](#). For more software check out [SharpBrains.com](#), which promotes science-based cognitive training.

3. Fat Factor

Omega-3 fatty acids, which are plentiful in flaxseed, walnuts, wild salmon, cooked soybeans and halibut, among other foods, are not only mood-boosters but can improve concentration, according to work at the University of Siena in Italy.

4. Take Folic Acid

Research published last year in the British medical journal the Lancet found that adults ages 50 to 70 who took 800mg a day of folic acid for three years did much better on cognitive tests than a placebo group.

5. Bottoms Up

Follow your brain-boosting routine and then reward yourself with a daily glass of kindness. Among seniors with mild memory and cognitive problems, those who had one alcoholic drink a day, typically wine, had a slower progression of their dementia over a three-year period than the teetotalers. (But be sure not to go over the [CDC's recommended intake](#) of one or two drinks for men and one for women.)

6. Relax

Seniors with higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol in their blood have a smaller hippocampus and do worse on memory tests, according to researchers at Douglas Hospital. Stress may also act as a trigger to poor memory in people with a gene associated with Alzheimer's. You can find the American Academy of Family Physicians' tips on managing stress [here](#).

URL: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/94960>

© Newsweek.com