



Age-Related Memory Loss: Reducing and Preventing Symptoms

Lifelong Learning and Exercise of the Brain

When it comes to memory, it's "use it or lose it." Just as physical exercise can make and keep your body stronger, mental exercise can make your brain work better and lower the risk of mental decline. Here are some ideas for brain exercise, from light workouts to heavy lifting:

- Play games that involve strategy, like chess or bridge, and word games like Scrabble.
- Work crossword and other word puzzles, or number puzzles such as Sudoku.
- Read newspapers, magazines, and books that challenge you.
- Get in the habit of learning new things: games, recipes, driving routes.
- Take a course in an unfamiliar subject.
- Take on a project that involves design and planning: a new garden, a quilt, a koi pond.



Compensating for Memory Loss

Even if you are experiencing a troublesome level of memory loss, there are many things you can do to learn new information and retain it.

<p>Regular Exercise</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It gets more oxygen to your brain. • It reduces the risk for disorders that lead to memory loss, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. • It may enhance the effects of helpful brain chemicals and protect brain cells.
<p>Remembering Where You Put Things</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put the things you use regularly (keys, glasses, purse, watch) in the same spot when you're not using them. • If you have to put something down in a different place, look at the place when you put down the object and say the location out loud. • If necessary, write down where things are.
<p>Staying on Top of Times and Places</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set an alarm clock or timer to remind you when to leave for an appointment or do something in your home. • Use a map to help you get from one place to another.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlist friends and relatives to remind you of where you need to be and things you're supposed to do.
Learning New Information	<p>Work on your ability to focus your attention and screen out distractions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen closely when someone talks to you. • Repeat back the information. • Try to talk with people in quiet places. • Focus on one thing at a time.

Preventing Memory Loss

The same practices that contribute to healthy aging also contribute to healthy memory.

- Leave yourself notes or make checklists.
- Put appointments and important dates on calendars and in a day planner or electronic organizer.
- Do this as well for phone numbers and other contact information
- If you have trouble remembering how to do something, write down the steps.

Healthy Diet Featuring Fruits, Vegetables, Whole Grains, and "Healthy" Fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antioxidants literally keep your brain cells from "rusting." • B vitamins protect neurons and help reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases. • Avoiding saturated fats and trans fats helps cholesterol levels and reduces the risk of stroke.
Managing Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cortisol, the stress hormone, can damage the hippocampus if stress is unrelieved. • Stress makes it difficult to concentrate.
Good Sleep and Enough of It	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleep is necessary for memory consolidation. • Sleep disorders like insomnia and sleep apnea leave you tired and unable to concentrate during the day.
Not Smoking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoking heightens the risk of vascular disorders that can cause stroke and constrict arteries that deliver oxygen to the brain.

In addition, below are two other lifestyle factors that are crucial for maintaining healthy memory throughout life.

Developing and Maintaining Social Relationships

People who don't have social contact with family and friends are at higher risk for memory problems than people who have strong social ties. Social interaction helps brain function in several ways: It often involves activity that challenges the mind, and it helps ward off stress and depression. So join a book club, reconnect with old friends, or visit the local senior center. Being with other people will help keep you sharp!

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