

Support Your Memory with Simple Strategies

Paying attention to your overall health can help with memory.

- See your healthcare professional regularly.** Health problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, thyroid disorders, and depression can cause thinking problems if left untreated.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes a day, 5 times a week.** This can help by increasing blood flow to your brain. You want to get your heart rate up! Walk fast, bike, swim, or dance with enough intensity that you cannot carry on a normal conversation.
- Get enough sleep (quantity).** Sleeping at least 7 or 8 hours a night can help you concentrate and remember better.
- Get good quality sleep.** Snoring while sleeping and feeling drowsy the next day can be signs of sleep apnea. People with untreated sleep apnea stop breathing briefly, but repeatedly, while sleeping. This interrupted breathing can deprive the brain of oxygen and cause memory problems.
- Eat a balanced, good diet.** Choose foods like fruits and vegetables, along with whole grains, and fish like salmon, tuna, and sardines, which are rich in heart- and brain-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Substitute olive oil for butter. Limit processed foods. If you drink alcohol, limit it to no more than one three drinks per day or 7 drinks in a week. (One drink = 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of hard liquor.) If you have health problems or take certain medications, you may need to drink less or not at all.
- Practice stress reduction techniques.** Stress can make learning and recalling more difficult. Activities like yoga, meditation, and prayer can take the edge off stress and may help with memory.
- Keep hydrated.** Drink enough water—6 to 8 glasses a day—to promote general health.
- Don't do two or more tasks at once (multi-tasking).** Multi-tasking—such as reading this sheet and listening to the news at the same time—will decrease recall later. Focus on one thing at a time.

- ✓ **Certain medications can affect your memory.** This is especially true for sleeping pills, painkillers, allergy medications, and certain anti-anxiety drugs. Talk to your healthcare provider if you are concerned.

Some practical strategies as you go about your day:

- ✓ **Carry a planner or notebook with you to write down your appointments and tasks.** If you prefer technology, use your smartphone or tablet.
- ✓ **Improve organization.** Assign specific places for specific items. Glasses might go on your nightstand, for instance. Always put your keys, your medications, your wallet, your checkbook, and the remote control in the same place.
- ✓ **Stay (or become) social.** Watching TV or doing crossword puzzles will not help your memory. For example, going to religious services, getting together with friends, or attending your grandkids' soccer games are better ways to spend your time.

Finally, remember that, while your brain works like a computer, you should think of it as a muscle. Keep it healthy, happy, and well worked out.