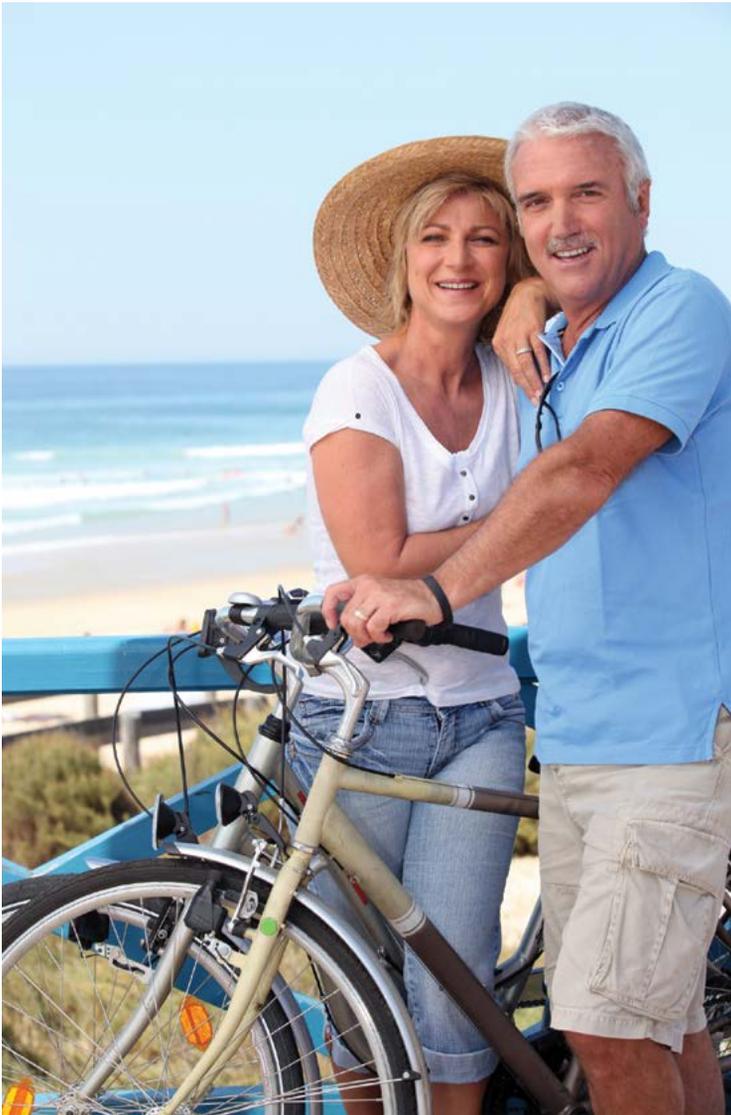


# TIPS TO KEEP YOUR MEMORY SHARP

By Dedra Jize



*Who hasn't gone into a room only to stop and wonder why you went in there? When we were younger, we would laugh it off until we remembered what we wanted in the first place. However, as we get older, these types of occurrences may trouble us and make us question our memory or even ask, "Am I getting Alzheimer's?"*

Be assured that this is a normal part of living that occurs at any age, and it gets worse as we become tired, stressed or are doing too many things at the same time.

Nonetheless, we still worry about our memory and want to do things to keep it intact or even improve it, if possible. Essentially, a healthy body makes for a healthy mind. Keep that in mind (no pun intended) and you and your brain will benefit.

**Get Your Exercise:** Exercise keeps the blood moving. Your brain is fed with the oxygen and nutrients found in the blood stream. Exercise will also reduce the risk of some disorders associated with memory loss such as obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Studies show that seniors who walk six to nine miles a week have more gray matter nine years later than those who didn't exercise. Seniors who walked the most cut their risk of developing memory loss in half.

**Eat Healthy:** Consuming fruits and vegetables helps your heart but it also helps your brain, too (and thus memory). Experts recommend five to seven servings a day of vegetables and fruits. In addition, eating foods rich in omega-3 fats (i.e. salmon, tuna, and walnuts) are particularly good for your brain.

**Reduce Stress:** Stress releases a hormone in your body called cortisol which causes temporary memory loss. If stress continues over long periods of time, damage to the brain can occur. The most damaging stress is major depression. The effects of depression on the brain can last long after the depression lifts. Therefore, reorganize, prioritize or delegate those things that bring stress into your life.

**Get Your Sleep:** At least seven hours of sleep a night is important for the brain to consolidate memories, regenerate neurons and lower stress hormones. In addition, if sleep is compromised, this can lead to depression.

**Drink Wine (red preferably) in Moderation:** Studies show that controlled alcohol consumption has positive results on the memory. A French study of people over the age of 65 who consumed up to two glasses

of red wine per day showed they were 45 percent less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease than the nondrinkers.

**Get Socializing:** Social activity has shown to prevent depression and thus memory loss. In addition, studies show that those with strong community ties have less memory problems than those who have minimal engagement with family or friends.

**Mental Activity:** Giving your brain new information to store and retrieve is the best way to preserve your memory. There are plenty of ways to do this from crossword puzzles to learning a new skill. Studies show that regular 'memory-training exercises' improve the cognitive ability in seniors. Games that use as many of the senses as possible are best.

Your brain can be compared to a huge warehouse. Imagine a fork lift in that warehouse that is constantly moving 'boxes of information' from one place to another as they are being stored, retrieved or reorganized for more boxes to come in. We need to keep that fork lift powered up (eating healthy and getting exercise), running well (reduce stress and have a glass of red wine), give it breaks occasionally (socialize and sleep), and keep stuff from getting in its way (mental activity).

As we age, that fork lift may need to travel a little further or shuffle around the boxes more often which make that fork lift take a little longer to do its job. But put your mind at ease, regardless of age, it can still work as it has and there is still boundless room for additional 'boxes of information'.

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