



Improve Your Memory Quickly With These Nine Tips

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Though you may not notice it until you reach your mind-60s, your memory starts a gradual decline around the ripe old age of 25, according to University of Michigan psychologist Denise Park.

"Younger adults in their 20s and 30s notice no losses at all, even though they are declining at the same rate as people in their 60s and 70s, because they have more capital than they need," says Park in Scientific American.

Don't worry.

Most of this mental decline is quite harmless, though it may lead you to have trouble recalling certain facts or make multitasking more difficult. The good news is that, like your muscles, your brain can be built up and strengthened at any age, and here are the top tips to do so.

1. Exercise

Regular exercise is not only good for your body, it's good for your mind. Specifically, exercise increases blood flow to your brain and has been found to delay or prevent age-related mental decline, and may even provide memory improvement, according to the Mayo Clinic.

2. Meditate

Studies show that meditation can sharpen your brain. For instance, a study by University of Kentucky researchers found that people who took a test after meditating had significantly better scores than people who had napped instead. Researchers at Harvard, Yale and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have also found that meditation increases brain size and may help slow some aspects of cognitive aging.

3. Get a Good Night's Sleep

Getting enough high-quality sleep can improve your memory, according to research. Further, when you learn a new skill, the memories are vulnerable until they are "solidified" in your brain. It appears that sleeping plays a key role in this process, which may explain why infants, who are constantly learning new skills, require so much more sleep than adults.

4. Concentrate

The more you try to multi-task, the less you will end up actually remembering. This is because your brain is constantly switching back and forth between tasks, rather than really honing in on one. So if you're in the middle of a task that's full of important details you need to remember, turn off the TV, the radio and any other interruptions so you can really focus.

5. Make Sure You're Getting Enough Iron

Iron is used by your brain to help your memory function properly, and studies have found that women with low iron levels score lower on memory tests than women with normal amounts. You should have your blood levels of iron (ferritin) tested before taking a supplement, however, as it's also possible to have too much iron.

6. Eat Apples

"Apples have just the right dose of antioxidants to raise levels of acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter that's essential to memory and tends to decline with age," says Tom Shea, PhD, director of the University of Massachusetts Lowell Center for Cellular Neurobiology and Neurodegeneration Research, in Prevention. Of course, fruits and veggies of all kinds contain antioxidants that are good for your body and your brain, so indulge in them freely.

7. Use Your Brain

A study in The New England Journal of Medicine found that seniors who participated in mentally challenging activities about once a week for a 20-year period reduced the risk of dementia by 7 percent. Those who engaged in these activities more often reduced their risk even more -- by 63 percent! To keep your mind on its toes, try out a new hobby that will get you thinking, such as:

- Learning how to play a musical instrument
- Playing Sudoku, crossword puzzles, cards or board games
- Learning a foreign language
- Reading
- Creative writing
- Woodworking

8. Don't Worry About It

A study published in Psychology and Aging found that when seniors were told that aging causes forgetfulness, they did poorly on memory tests. On the other hand, seniors who were told that their memory wasn't influenced by their age scored 15 percent higher. The bottom line? If you believe that your memory is in good shape, it will be.

9. Have a Cocktail (in Moderation)

A study in the New England Journal of Medicine found that one-half to one drink a day may be beneficial for your brain. In fact, in the study of over 12,000 elderly women, those who drank light to moderate amounts of alcohol daily had a 20 percent lower risk of having problems with their mental abilities later in life than women who did not drink at all. Too much drinking, of course, will be counterproductive so be sure NOT to overindulge.