

Rotary Down Under NZ Pacific Edition. Issue 572, May 2015

LIFE & LIVING



MEMORY MATTERS!

Rotary membership is great for your brain and memory health, but can you do more?

Words by Dr Allison Lamont

“I have a terrible memory.” How often have you heard that? When I meet new people and we start to research and read age-related memory tips, the most common response is, “You should research me – my memory is so dreadful!”

Do you lose your glasses? Forget names? Have trouble remembering appointments? Even why you went into another room?

What’s happening? Are you losing your edge?

Many people are worried about memory and become concerned these potential signs may be the beginning of losing memory altogether. Perhaps you have been told that from the age of 50 you lose brain cells at a prodigious rate.

The good news is that neuroscience, with the aid of sophisticated imaging techniques, has blown away the old gloomy myths about ageing and memory. It is likely that your memory has dulled simply because your brain (and maybe your body, too) is no longer in topnotch shape. You don’t have to accept memory loss as inevitable; you can take steps to improve your brain fitness.

With my sister, Gillian Laidie, a noted educator, we combined our skills to create practical solutions to help people remember confidently and well at any age. That’s our mother, Jeanie, in her 90s, who diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. As

7 Tips for smarter snacking

Do you get hungry at odd times of the day? With a bit of preparation, you can feed your brain as well as those pangs!

1. **Go for the grain.** Wholegrain snacks such as wholegrain low-salt pretzels or tortilla chips and high-fibre, wholegrain cereals can give you some energy with staying power.
2. **Bring back breakfast.** Many breakfast foods can be repurposed as a nutritious snack later in the day. How about a slice of wholegrain toast topped with low-sugar jam? Low-sugar granola also makes a quick snack.
3. **Try a “hi-low” combination.** Combine a small amount of something with healthy fat, like peanut butter, with a larger amount of something very light, like apple slices or celery sticks.
4. **Go nuts.** Unsalted nuts and seeds make great snacks. Almonds, walnuts, peanuts, roasted pumpkin seeds, cashews, hazelnuts, flseeds and other nuts and seeds contain many beneficial nutrients and are more likely to leave you feeling full (unlike chips or pretzels). Nuts have lots of calories, though, so keep portion sizes small.
5. **The combo snack.** Try to eat more than one macronutrient (protein, fat, carbohydrate) at each snacking session. For example, have a few nuts (protein and fat) and some grapes (carbohydrate). Try some wholegrain crackers (carbohydrate) with some low-fat cheese (protein and fat).
6. **Snack mindfully.** Don’t eat your snack while doing something else like surfing the web, watching TV or working at your desk. Instead, stop what you’re doing for a few minutes and eat your snack like you would a small meal.
7. **You can take it with you.** Think ahead and carry a small bag of healthful snacks in your pocket or purse so you won’t turn in desperation to the cookies at the coffee counter.

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10 habits for a healthy brain

1. **Find out about your brain and you can make the most of your brain power.** Knowing that your brain is a constantly developing miracle with billions of neurons and synapses will encourage you to take important steps to keep it flourishing.
2. **Take care of your nutrition.** Although your brain weighs only 2 per cent of your body mass, it needs over 20 per cent of the oxygen and nutrients you take in. Eat plenty of wholegrains, berries, broccoli and other greens, eggs, oily fish, nuts and proteins.
3. **Remember that your brain is part of the body and it needs exercise.** Exercising your body helps to sharpen your brain. Physical exercise enhances the regeneration of new brain connections and blood vessels that bring oxygen and nutrients to the brain.
4. **Make a determined effort to focus on positive aspects of your day.** Looking forward to every new day is a constructive way that reduces stress and anxiety. Both of these are the enemy of memory and brain growth.
5. **Seek out mental challenges.** Adapting to challenging new environments, learning new computer programs or a challenging range of puzzles stimulates the growth of new neurons.
6. **Aim high.** Keep setting yourself goals and seek out learning. Once you become too comfortable in one job, find a new one. The brain keeps developing, reflecting what you do with it.
7. **Explore, travel, accept invitations.** Pay more attention to the environment around you and notice details to share with others.
8. **Decide to have opinions of your own.** Read about issues, listen to debates and think about where you stand on issues.
9. **Develop and maintain friendships.** The more we socialise, the more we interact, converse and make connections. And your brain develops, too.
10. **Laugh. Often. Out loud.** Look for comedies, plays on words, humour that requires you to think about the meaning. And share your enjoyment with others.

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we cared for her we became “sisters on a mission” to make sure everyone knew we can grow new brain connections every day and harness the power of these neurons. And so the Memory Foundation was born, established to provide all the information you need to make sure memory leaves you well.

Staying mentally active, engaging in physical exercise, staying socially engaged and other important lifestyle factors all contribute to a sharp memory. That’s well known. But so many people asked us, “How do we go about setting up the best memory habits?”, so we devised a plan to get brain and memory health on track.

The result is the book, *7-Day Brain Boost Plan*. Our own background of memory expertise and education combined with contributions from a nutritionist and exercise specialist to give a day-by-day, step-by-step plan.

Check out the Memory Foundation website for yourself or www.memoryfoundation.org enjoy our memory games, read about your memory, or by the *7-Day Brain Boost Plan*.

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