

[IMAGE]

Slowing Memory Loss

By Editorial Staff

Your brain is an amazing, incomprehensible marvel (unless you're a neuroscientist, in which case it's just as amazing, but definitely more easily comprehended). But just like every other organ in the body, it generally doesn't function as well over time. Memory loss is a perfect example, and a troubling one for most people. After all, your ability to remember – particularly life events whose lasting significance is based on your ability to recall them) – is what keeps you *alive* even when the moments have passed.

How can we slow memory loss? One way is to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Here are the "simple six," according to the latest research involving 29,000+ adults ages 60 and older with no cognitive issues at baseline:

- A healthy diet
- Regular exercise
- Active social contact
- Active cognitive activity
- Never smoked or quit
- Never drinking alcohol

Researchers divided participants into three groups: favorable (4-6 healthy lifestyle factors), average (2-3 factors) and unfavorable (0-1 factors). Memory function, assessed via the World Health Organization / University of California-Los Angeles Auditory Verbal Learning Test, was preserved to a higher degree in the favorable vs. unfavorable group (slower memory decline). Of note, this trend was observed even in carriers of the APOE ε4 gene, which is known to increase the risk of memory decline and impaired memory performance. Findings appear in the *British Medical Journal*.

So, let's say you do all six of the above. How much is enough? Per the researchers, here's how it breaks down for the first four (smoking and alcohol status are self-explanatory): 1) a healthy diet: recommended intake of at least seven of 12 eligible items (fruits, vegetables, fish, meat, dairy products, salt, oil, eggs, cereals, legumes, nuts, and tea); 2) regular exercise: ≥150 minutes of moderate intensity or ≥75 minutes of

vigorous intensity weekly; 3) active social contact: visiting with friends, chatting online, traveling, etc., at least twice per week; and 4) active cognitive activity: writing, playing cards or other games, etc., at least twice per week.

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