

**GLOBE**

healthreport

WHILE some memory loss is normal with aging, simple changes in lifestyle habits – such as diet, sleep and exercise – can help beat mental decline, say experts.

“There is compelling scientific evidence that lifestyle changes and gently challenging the brain can keep your memory sharper, longer,” UCLA psychiatry professor Dr. Gary Small, author of the Memory Bible, tells GLOBE.

Dr. Ellen Kamhi, author of *The Natural Medicine Chest*, suggests taking “exercise classes to increase physical activity bringing more oxygen to the brain.”

Also, brain-challenging exercises “stimulate new neuron growth in brain cells,” she notes.

She suggests simple drills like “brushing your teeth with the non-dominant hand or performing everyday tasks like getting dressed with your eyes closed.”

Experts also say omega 3 fatty acids found in fish and fish oil in supplements can cut the risk of memory loss.

Here are five common causes of short-term memory loss not due to aging and what you can do about them:

● **Medication** – “Drugs can cause loss of brain function,” Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum, author

5 COMMON CAUSES OF MEMORY LOSS



To avoid serious head injury, always be sure to wear a protective helmet when cycling

of *Real Cause, Real Cure*, says. The most common culprits are statins, anti-anxiety drugs, painkillers, beta-blockers for hypertension and sleep medications. Talk with your doctor about safer alternatives.

● **Head Injuries** – Traumatic brain damage is the leading cause of death from sports injuries. The most common are cycling accidents. Wear a helmet when playing any contact sport or doing a sporting activity.

● **Metabolic Syndrome** – Mental decline has been linked to this condition defined by excess fat around the waistline, high blood pressure, blood sugar levels and triglycerides, and low levels of HDL, the good cholesterol. Daily exercise and eating a low-fat, fiber-rich diet can reduce your risk of metabolic syndrome, says Kamhi.

● **Diabetes** – A recent study revealed that complications from diabetes increases the risk of developing Alzheimer's by a whopping 65 percent! Type 2 diabetes can be prevented or controlled by healthy lifestyle choices.

● **Sleep** – Getting a good night's sleep is essential for your memory banks and overall health. Also, sleep disorders can put your memory at risk. Sleep apnea, with interrupted breathing, can lead to learning and memory problems. See your doctor about treatment options.

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Update

Painkillers make flu bug stronger

➤ **IF** you've got the flu and feel achy all over, do NOT reach for a painkiller – it could do more harm than good, according to new research. An analysis shows aspirin or acetaminophen lowers fever, making the virus worse. McMaster University of Ontario research shows lowering fevers can prolong the infection and increase the amount of virus we pass on to others. Painkillers taken to treat fevers could cause 2,000 flu deaths a year, say scientists.

New heart valve replacement

➤ **A TREATMENT** allowing the replacement of diseased heart valves in patients too ill to endure open heart surgery has been approved by the FDA. Medtronic's minimally invasive CoreValve system works like an angioplasty and threads a replacement valve into place through a catheter installed in an artery. The method spares the patient chest-cracking surgery and shortens recovery time. Well-tested, the CoreValve treatment has been available in Europe since 2007.

Eating fiber fights asthma

➤ **NOT** eating enough fiber boosts the risk of asthma! That's the conclusion of researchers who say a lack of soluble fiber in the typical American diet increases lung inflammation. Fiber changes the bacteria composition in the gut, transforming them into short-chain fatty acids that enter the bloodstream and raises immune cell development. Some experts believe Irritable Bowel Syndrome could have the same trigger as asthma.