Food Tips to Boost Your Memory

The diet we eat impacts our ability to remember facts, data, and events. What are the six dietary tips to improve your memory?

The Ultimate Weight-Loss Beverage
Learn why this beverage helps you to loose weight and when to drink it for weight loss success.

FOOD COURT

Building Your Antioxidant Defenses Naturally

Crispy Tortillas for Tostadas

Inspirational Story
If you ever struggle with fibromyalgia, diabetes, or obesity, Jean’s experience will encourage you.

Jean S. - I Came Off My Diabetes Medication In Just 4 Days
Having lived in the area for about 20 years, I had known about Wildwood Lifestyle Center for a long time. Through the years my daughter came to the clinic as an outpatient and we had shopped at the Wildwood store. Finally when I decided to come to Wildwood it was to lower my blood pressure, lose weight, get my diabetes under control and have more energy. I knew that I needed to come for 25 days, because it would take that long to break old habits and learn new ones.

I was here for only one day when the doctor cut my diabetes medication in half. Just days later he told me I didn’t need the medication at all because my glucose readings looked so good. That was amazing! I’ve lost weight. While I was here I had a Fibromyalgia attack and I learned how to be able to control that without taking medications when I get home.

Everyone here has helped me to meet my goals. Along with losing 10 pounds, which I’m so happy about, I’m just so thankful for the opportunity to come here. I’m well on my way to being able to have a new lifestyle.
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If you want a super memory, skip the sodas and junk foods. Why? Eating sugary foods or gulping down a soft drink, especially when done on an empty stomach, causes a steep rise and sharp decline in your blood sugar. Such a sudden, steep rise and drop in blood sugar causes a decline in mental performance including memory. Here’s more evidence:

Rodent experiments suggest that consuming sugar-sweetened drinks interferes with our brain’s ability to function normally and remember critical information about our environment, at least when consumed in excess before adulthood.¹ Sugar-sweetened beverage consumption also produces inflammation in the hippocampus, an area of the brain that is involved in learning and memory.

In another study adolescent rats freely consumed large quantities of liquids containing sugar or high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) in concentrations comparable to popular sugar-sweetened beverages. They experienced memory problems, brain inflammation, and became pre-diabetic.²

Higher consumption of dietary trans fatty acids, commonly used in processed foods to improve taste, texture, and durability, has been linked to worsened memory function in men 45 years old and younger.³

Replace sugar and fatty food with high fiber plant food! The bacteria in your gut are changed by the foods you eat. In one interesting study, non-obese adult mice maintained on a normal diet received a transplant of gut microbiota from donor mice that had been fed either a high-fat diet or control diet. The recipient mice were then evaluated for changes in behavior and cognition. The animals who received the microbiota shaped by a high-fat diet showed multiple disruptions in behavior, such as increased anxiety, impaired memory, and repetitive behaviors. Not only that, they showed many detrimental effects in the body, including increased intestinal permeability and markers of inflammation.⁴

Gut bacteria release compounds that act on brain cells. Both a high-fat and a high-sugar diet, when compared to a normal diet, cause changes in gut bacteria that appear related to a significant loss of the power to adapt and adjust to changing situations (cognitive flexibility).⁵ A high fiber diet improves the composition of gut microflora so that inflammation is reduced.

Impaired glucose tolerance as in pre-diabetes and diabetes can impair cognitive performance. Obesity, diabetes, and even high normal range blood sugar levels eventually shrink the hippocampus. Japanese researchers found that when exercise and 30 grams of fiber were added daily to the diet of those participants who had either impaired glucose tolerance or outright diabetes, their mental performance actually improved from their baseline evaluations.⁶

Enjoy more whole fruits and vegetables. There is fairly strong evidence that eating berries on a regular basis has beneficial effects on the brain and may help prevent age-related memory loss and other changes.⁷ A daily intake of blueberries can actually improve memory and learning in the elderly.⁸

Researchers studied 718 residents in Chicago who were 65 years or older and found that, compared to individuals
who consumed less than one serving of vegetables a day, individuals who ate at least 2.8 servings of vegetables a day saw their rate of cognitive decline slow by roughly 40 percent. What were best vegetables for improving mental performance? Green, leafy vegetables had the strongest association to slowing the rate of cognitive decline. This study also found the older the person, the greater the slowdown in the rate of cognitive decline if that person consumed more than two servings of vegetables a day.9

Three ways to get your kids to enjoy vegetables: If your children do not enjoy vegetables, may I suggest three tips to help? Get them involved in growing a vegetable garden and food preparation. Children involved in food prep are more likely to enjoy and eat fruits and veggies than children who do not cook.10 One study showed that when home-grown vegetables were slipped into school salads, kids were over four times as likely to take a salad.11 If you don’t have space for a garden, consider container gardening. Adding cooked carrots and celery to whole grain spaghetti is a winner. Add celery and onions to your legumes toward the end of cooking time.

Check your diet for adequacy. There is mounting evidence that suggests that there is an association between low vitamin D levels and cognitive decline over time.12 Vitamin D insufficiency is common in Western Europe and North America. Dark-skinned individuals, sedentary workers, and elderly individuals are especially vulnerable to vitamin D deficiency. Although many of us can get enough vitamin D in the summer by exposing our skin to the sunlight for 15 to 20 minutes (without sunscreen), this does not necessarily hold true for elderly individuals. It is difficult to obtain vitamin D by exposing our skin to the sunlight during cold, winter months. Therefore, it is important to drink non-dairy milk, fortified with vitamin D and to consider taking a supplement if one is elderly, or is enduring the cold winter season, or is eating a vegan diet.

Low levels of vitamin B-12 have also been linked to poorer memory. Low blood levels of vitamin B12 have been linked to brain shrinkage and impaired thinking skills in older individuals.13 Individuals taking antacids, consuming a vegan diet, or having a history of gastritis are at risk for a B-12 deficiency.

A diet lacking in omega-3 fatty acids may cause your brain to age faster and lose some of its memory and thinking abilities.14 Omega 3 fatty acids are found in fish. But heavy metals, pesticides, and environmental pollutants are also found in fish fatty tissues. Therefore, the author recommends that, for most people, consumption of chia seed, flaxseed, walnuts, and green leafy vegetables will insure a good supply of omega 3 fats.

A synapse is a microscopic place of communication between one nerve cell and the next that allows information to pass from one neuron to the next. Synapses play an essential role in learning and memory. Synapses have the potential to grow in size, become more efficient, and multiply in number; all of these improve memory and the ease of learning. This process is known as synaptic plasticity. Omega-3 fatty acids support synaptic plasticity.15

Eat temperately. Both overeating and obesity are hard on brain cells. Obesity produces inflammation within the brain. Rodent studies reveal that long-term consumption of a high-calorie diet adversely affects the brain, damages the cells in the hippocampus, and increases the risk of neurodegenerative disorders. In contrast, wise calorie restriction protects neurons effectively against aging and damage, and preserves learning and memory capacity better.16

Eating excess calories increases the risk or mild cognitive impairment which includes memory loss. Eating 2,100 to 6,000 calories per day may double the risk of memory loss, or mild cognitive impairment (MCI), among people age 70 and older.17

Studies show that confining caloric consumption to an 8- to 12-hour period, as people did just a century ago, might stave off high cholesterol, diabetes, and obesity.18 All three conditions increase the risk for cognitive decline and dementia. In other words, if you want a healthy brain, skip nighttime snacking.

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References:


11. Wansink, B. A plant to plate pilot: a cold-climate high school garden increased vegetable selection but also waste.


Researchers have shown that drinking 500ml of water (two cups) half an hour before eating the main meal may help obese adults to lose weight. In one study obese participants were given a weight management consultation being advised on how to adapt their lifestyle and improve their diet and levels of physical activity. 41 participants were asked to preload with water, and 43 were advised to imagine that they had a full stomach before eating. Those in the group that drank water 30 minutes prior to all three meals lost on the average 1.3kg (2.87lbs) more than those in the control group. At the end of 12 weeks those individuals who reported preloading water, before all three main meals in the day, had a loss of 4.3kg (9.48lbs). Those who only preloaded water before one meal, or not at all, only lost an average of 0.8kg (1.76lbs).¹

Earlier studies showed that middle aged and older people who drank two cups of water right before eating a meal ate between 75 and 90 fewer calories during that meal.² Another study found that at the end of a 12-week period, dieters who drank water before meals, three times per day, lost about 5 pounds more than dieters who did not increase their water intake.³

Boschman and associates discovered that drinking 500 ml of water increases metabolic rate by 30% in both men and women. The increase in metabolic rate was observed within 10 min after completion and reached a maximum metabolic rate 30–40 min after water drinking. This effect was sustained for an hour.⁴

Water drinking offers another advantage for obese individuals. Obesity significantly increases the risk for blood clots. Water is a natural blood thinner. So, if you are obese, why not try to drink two cups of pure water 30 minutes before each meal? Your results will be even better if you eat mainly plant foods and engage in regular exercise!

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References:

Free radicals are unstable molecules or atoms that have an uneven number of electrons in their outermost orbits. In an attempt to balance their electric charge, they steal an electron from a neighboring atom, thus creating more free radicals.

Chronic diseases have been associated with free radical damage. Poor lifestyle habits such as the use of alcohol, tobacco, excess dietary fat, drugs, over-exercising, and overeating all create free radicals. Leaky car mufflers, idling engines, and other types of air pollution also contribute to free radical overload in the body. It is estimated that each cell receives 10,000 daily assaults from free radicals that damage cell membranes, protein, and fat in body tissues and DNA. Free radicals contribute to inflammation which fuels chronic degenerative diseases as inflammation generates even more free radical production. Antioxidants help to protect your cells from free radical damage.

Radically Beneficial

Within the mitochondria, or powerhouses of cells, free radicals are essential for the production of energy. They also destroy germs inside the garbage disposal system of the cells (lysosomes). Ideally, the membranes of the mitochondria and lysosomes keep free radicals under control. However, when the membranes of these organelles are damaged, free radicals leak out and damage cellular components and molecules, creating detrimental conditions.

Minimizing Damage from Free Radicals

1. Don’t smoke. Smoking lowers the antioxidant capacity of the body.
2. Adopt a temperate lifestyle, avoiding everything harmful and practicing moderation in everything good. Overeating, obesity, and extreme exercise encourage the production of free radicals.
3. Reduce your risk for chronic diseases by practicing good lifestyle habits. Keep any existing chronic diseases under control. Diabetes, insulin resistance, inflammation, and hypertension are conditions which generate more free radicals.
4. Use motorized vehicles only when necessary, to reduce air pollution.
5. Get enough sleep. Insufficient sleep increases inflammatory compounds in the body and consequently, more free radicals are produced.

Eight Ways to Boost Your Antioxidant Intake

**Eat colorful fruits and vegetables.** These contain antioxidant vitamins and phytochemicals which prevent free radical damage. Artichokes and Russet potatoes top the vegetable list. Green, leafy vegetables are especially loaded with anti-oxidants. Spinach, broccoli, and tomatoes, in particular, contain alpha-lipoic acid, a phytochemical
beneficial for those who have hypertension. Alpha-lipoic acid also helps reduce free radical damage to the brain cells.

The carotenoids are a family of several hundred fat-soluble pigments found in yellow-orange and red fruits and vegetables, as well as green-leafy vegetables, which exert antioxidant activity.

Berries, apples, plums, and cherries scored the highest antioxidant content among fruits, with wild blueberries being unsurpassed. Since many antioxidant phytochemicals work in synergy, it is generally better to get them from whole foods as opposed to supplements.

**Replace refined and processed grains with whole grains.** Whole grains are valuable sources of antioxidants; they also provide necessary minerals, fiber, and protein. “Wheat flour” is not generally whole grain flour. So read labels carefully.

**Substitute legumes for meat.** Small red beans, red kidney, and pinto beans contain more antioxidants than cultivated blueberries.

**Eat one or two ounces of nuts a day.** Nuts, especially walnuts, not only provide vitamin E, but also have phytochemicals that exert antioxidant activity. Brazil nuts are rich in the trace mineral and antioxidant, selenium.

**Use antioxidant-rich seasonings** such as oregano, ginger, garlic, dill, thyme, mint, and onions. Curcumin in turmeric has been shown to exhibit both antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activities. Be sure to keep your herbs in dark containers, as exposure to light can destroy some of their healing phytochemicals.

**Drink a cup of tea daily.** While we cannot recommend green tea because of its caffeine content, certain herbal teas are helpful. Rooibos (red bush) boosts the antioxidant defenses in the blood. Hibiscus tea is also rich in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds.

**Use honey instead of sugar.** While sugar consumption depletes antioxidants and encourages inflammation, natural, unprocessed honey contains antioxidants and combats inflammation. In fact, it has over 100 antioxidant compounds! Since honey is a concentrated food, use it judiciously.

**Get sunlight.** Vitamin D is a marvelous antioxidant and anti-inflammatory compound. Dark-skinned individuals, those who use sunscreen, or live in the North are at risk for vitamin D deficiency. The elderly have a reduced capacity for obtaining vitamin D from sun exposure. It would be judicious to have your vitamin D level checked if you are at risk.

**Keep balance.** The elderly often have a reduced capacity to absorb nutrients. While mild supplementation of antioxidants may help certain chronic conditions, supplementation of a single antioxidant in mega doses can actually create a deleterious pro-oxidant state in the body. Also some pro-oxidant molecules and compounds, when kept under control, are essential to the health of the body. So, skip mega-doses of antioxidants unless your doctor prescribes it. One caveat here: excess iron generates free radicals. Don't use a supplement containing iron unless you have an iron deficiency. If taking a drug or using medicinal amounts of herbs, please consult with your pharmacist if you are planning to take a vitamin supplement, as some drugs and herbs negatively interact with vitamins while other medications decrease vitamin absorption.

**References**


Crispy Tortillas for Tostadas

Webster’s definition of a tostada is “a tortilla fried in deep fat.” But frying in fat results in many health problems. Here is how to make the tortilla crispy without frying.

1 dozen corn tortillas

2 wire cooling racks

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.

2. Place racks with tortillas between in preheated oven. Bake about 10 minutes, watching carefully so they don’t burn. They may need 11-12 minutes and should be light brown – not too brown and not too light. If undercooked, they will be tough. If left too long, they will taste burned. Experience will help you get them just right – golden brown and tender!