

AMG HealthWise

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YOUR MEMORY

Lost your keys..... forget a name..... When should you worry?

If you're worried about lapses in your memory, you're in good company: About 80% of people feel they have a problem remembering names, and about 60% say they forget phone numbers and misplace items such as keys often enough to consider it a problem.

It's true that memory slightly declines after 30, but it usually doesn't become noticeably impaired until after age 75. Instead, memory problems seem to come to light in middle age because people tend to be more aware of their memory shortcomings when they need it the most — at an age when they have more responsibilities and need to remember more.

Indeed, some 10,000 Americans are turning 50 every day, and as they do, many begin experiencing signs of memory impairment. What's more, the baby boom generation now entering midlife is the first to have grown up fully aware of the ravages of Alzheimer's disease, which their parents knew more benignly as senility or "hardening of the arteries."



Faced with that awful prospect, boomers feel great anxiety about even the slightest loss of cognitive function. Is blanking on an acquaintances name or misplacing the car keys an early sign of encroaching dementia? Worried Americans are spending billions of dollars each year on memory enhancement aids, in the form of books, tapes, and mnemonics courses, not to mention aggressively marketed (but largely unproven) food supplements such as ginkgo biloba.

First of all, forgetting names is not uncommon, even at younger ages. Names are completely arbitrary; the brain has evolved as much for forgetting as remembering — it would be disabling if we stored too much irrelevant information — and names often lack both context and emotional power. Further, memory researchers say, most people who *experience trouble calling up names or other similar information really have a problem with speed of retrieval*. It's not that the memories are fading or disintegrating that accounts for the familiar "tip of the tongue" sensation, which researchers identify as an indicator of a *healthy memory search*.

Healthy people who blank on a word temporarily, then call it up, experience a sense of, "Oh, yeah. That's what I was searching for." **Victims of severe brain disorders experience neither the "tip of the tongue" sensation nor such a sense of recollection.**

Indeed, much of normal, age-related memory loss has to do with loss of processing speed. This can be seen not only with memory retrieval but with memory storage as well. For example, given a test where they have to learn a list of new words, older people often take longer than younger people to master the list; but with a bit more time and effort they usually can memorize

In This Issue...

Your Memory	Cover
Approach to High Blood Pressure	2
Your Memory Continued	2
Melanoma	3
Put on Your Sunscreen	3
Heart-Healthy Recipes	3
America in 1948	3
Readers Want to Know	4
How Your Body Works	4

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FOR URGENT CARE NEEDS!**

the list. This stands in sharp contrast to the victims of Alzheimer's disease, who have terrible trouble getting new information into storage. **Neither time nor cues appear to help.**

One kind of memory deficit that does seem to be a bad omen has to do with what researchers call "executive functioning." This is the kind of memory required for fairly complicated tasks that involve a sequence of steps — an oral presentation at the office, for example, or preparing a multicourse Thanksgiving dinner. Even perfectly healthy people may have to pause to remember what step comes next, the cranberry sauce or the potatoes, but serious disruption of such memory often indicates something could be seriously awry.

If you're concerned about your memory, that's a good sign. If you had a real memory problem, you wouldn't remember that you couldn't remember. But here's how you can help ease your mind and get the most from your memory:

Continued on page 2 . . .

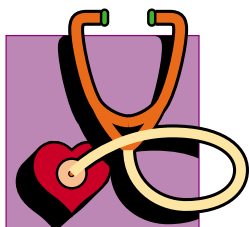
Approach to High Blood Pressure

Elevated blood pressure (hypertension) rarely causes symptoms. But it does raise the risk for serious complications like heart attacks, strokes and kidney failure.

Much can be done to prevent and treat hypertension. Unfortunately, one-third of the 50 million Americans who have the condition don't know it, and only a quarter of those who know they have it, have their pressure under control.

It's a good idea to get your blood pressure (BP) measured once a year. More frequent checks are worthwhile if hypertension runs in your family or if you have other risk factors for heart disease, such as smoking or diabetes.

Until recently, people were diagnosed with hypertension only if their readings were consistently above 140/90. But mounting evidence suggests that risk for complications rises when readings are consistently higher than 120/80. Elevations of either systolic pressure (the first number) or diastolic pressure (the second number) raise the risk.



- **Lose weight.** Blood pressure often starts to rise in middle age, when people start putting on pounds. Recent evidence suggests that even minimal weight loss — as little as one pound a year — can significantly reduce BP and risk for complications. The key is to *maintain* the loss.

A diet rich in fruits and vegetables, low-fat or nonfat dairy products and high-fiber food such as whole grains and legumes helps keep weight off.

Such a diet is also a great source of the vitamins and minerals known to reduce blood pressure. These include potassium, magnesium, calcium and vitamin C. You could try getting these vitamins and minerals from supplements, but evidence is stronger for the benefit of deriving them from foods.

- **Stay active.** Exercise is a key factor in maintaining weight loss. It also has a direct effect on blood pressure. Aerobic activities like swimming, brisk walking and biking are recommended.

- **Change pressure-boosting habits.** Stop smoking, limit alcohol consumption to two drinks a day and limit caffeinated beverages. Some people with hypertension are sensitive to salt, so it's worth avoiding salty foods, such as canned soups. Use the salt shaker sparingly, too.

- **Reduce psychological stress.** Stress and life satisfaction are big factors in blood pressure. Proven stress reduction measures include yoga, meditation and even owning a pet. Make time in your life for friends and family and for meaningful activities that enhance your sense of life's value.



Your Memory

Continued from Page 1 . . .

- Being worried or anxious can temporarily impair your memory. Some people find their memories "freeze up" under stressful situations. The trick is to relax and refocus your mind.

- Practice a healthy lifestyle with "heart smart" strategies to keep your arteries open and functioning optimally, so your brain will get a steady flow of blood to supply oxygen and nutrients. Regular exercise has been shown to improve some mental abilities by an average of 20 to 30%.

- Monitor your senses. You can't remember something if you never learned it in the first place. If you're having trouble paying attention because of poor eyesight or poor hearing, see a doctor about getting glasses or a hearing aid.

- Make lists, write yourself notes, keep a journal or diary of important facts and dates or tell a friend or spouse. Interestingly, the act of writing things down helps you remember, and having the list or a stack of Post-It notes will jog your memory.

- **CONCENTRATE.** The mind will hold onto information for only seconds unless it is impressed upon your memory through your active effort to remember it. For this reason, you should review the information you want to remember as soon as possible and either write it down or repeat it audibly.

- **LEARN WHAT'S IMPORTANT.** Don't try to remember every detail. Instead, prioritize the information and learn what is most important.

- **MAKE A CONNECTION.** The key to a good memory is an efficient organizational system. Associations help the brain organize information. Devices such as rhymes (Thirty days hath September...) trigger auditory memory; acronyms help you make an association. Visualizing as you read also aids memory recall because it gives your memory another association for the incoming information.

- **STUDY AND READ EFFICIENTLY.** The best way to improve your memory is also the best way to learn - study frequently in smaller chunks of time, avoid last minute cramming. As you **Read**, refer to any pictures or charts to associate what you are learning with a visual image. Most of your time should be spent **Reciting** what you have read, which heightens your concentration. Finally quickly **Review** what you have learned.

AMG HealthWise

Patsy C. Sharp, BS, CPM
Practice Administrator, Editor

Athens Medical Group would like to introduce you to the **AMG HealthWise** Newsletter. This publication is to advise you, of the latest news and information within our office. You can find it each month in our lobbies and in our patient rooms.

Reflections



*"There are four kinds
of people in the this world"*

Those who have been caregivers
Those who are currently caregivers
Those who will be caregivers and
Those who will need caregivers

Rosalynn Carter

Melanoma

What is melanoma?

Melanoma refers to a group of cancerous tumors, mainly of the skin. These cancers are composed of melanocytes. Melanocytes are cells that produce melanin, the pigment that colors the skin, hair, and iris of the eye. Melanoma often spreads and causes cancerous tumors in other parts of the body. Because it is the most life-threatening form of skin cancer, early diagnosis is important.

You may be at higher risk for a melanoma if you have:

- a family history of melanomas
- a fair complexion and light eyes
- a history of sunburns
- experienced lengthy exposure to the sun (especially at a young age)
- experienced lengthy exposure to tar and arsenic products
- experienced one or more severe sunburns any time in the past, especially as a teenager
- many pigmented nevi, which are skin blemishes including freckles, moles, and light to dark spots similar to freckles.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom of the early stages of melanoma is a change in a mole you may have had since childhood. The mole may:

- enlarge
- itch
- become lumpy
- become scaly or ulcer-like
- turn into a scab and not heal for weeks
- bleed for no apparent cause or just bleed easily
- develop an irregular or dark, spreading border
- become darker, lighter, or patchy; change color from brown to blue, black, red, and/or white

How is it treated?

Treatment usually consists of surgically removing the entire melanoma and a generous border of healthy tissue, to ensure that all of the cancerous tissue is removed. In some cases, if the melanoma is advanced and has spread to other parts of your body, treatment options include chemotherapy, radiation, immunotherapy, or surgery.

Prevention

- Protect yourself from exposure to the sun by wearing a broad-brimmed hat and always use protective skin lotion.
- Use a chemical sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 25 or higher with paraaminobenzoic acid.
- Stay out of the sun from 11 a.m. until 2:30 p.m., the hours of strongest sunlight.

Put on your Sunscreen!

Can you guess which of these people is older? Maybe it's not who you think! The monk on the right, who spent his life indoors, is 90. The Plains Indian woman on the left, who lived out in the blazing sun, is 56. Ultraviolet rays from the sun damaged cells in her epidermis, causing burning and wrinkling called "photoaging." Too much sun exposure can also make basic changes in cell structure leading to skin cancer (melanoma). Ultraviolet rays go through clouds and are present on cool days as well as warm ones. When you go outside, slather on that skin-protecting sunscreen.



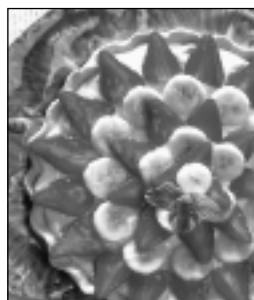
Source: Time Life Library

Heart-Healthy Recipes



Strawberry-Banana Tart

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 cup sifted cake flour | 1 tablespoon spoonable sugar substitute |
| 1 teaspoon spoonable sugar substitute | 1 medium banana, peeled and sliced |
| 1/4 cup margarine | Fresh mint sprig (optional) |
| 2 tablespoons ice water | 1/2 (8-ounce) package Neufchatel cheese, softened |
| 1 tablespoon lemon juice | 1/3 cup lemon-flavored nonfat yogurt sweetened with aspartame |
| 1 cup sliced fresh strawberries | |
| 1 tablespoon sugar-free apple jelly, melted | |

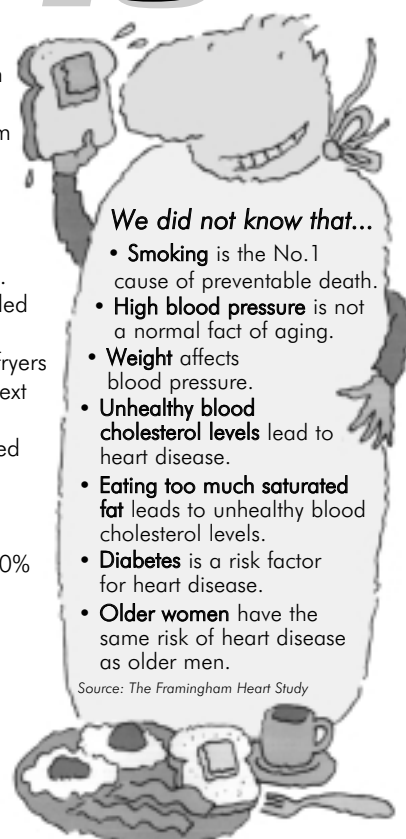


1. Combine flour and 1 teaspoon sugar substitute in a large bowl; cut in margarine with pastry blender until mixture resembles coarse meal and is pale yellow (about 3 1/2 minutes). Sprinkle ice water, 1 tablespoon at a time, over surface; toss with a fork just until dry ingredients are moistened and mixture is crumbly.
2. Roll dough into a 10-inch circle on an ungreased baking sheet; fold edges under, and flute. Prick bottom of pastry with a fork; cover and chill 10 minutes. Bake at 400° for 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool completely on baking sheet. Transfer tart shell to a serving platter.
3. Beat Neufchatel cheese in a small bowl at medium speed of an electric mixer until smooth. Stir in yogurt and 1 tablespoon sugar substitute. Gently spread cheese mixture in tart shell.
4. Combine banana slices and lemon juice in a small bowl; toss gently to coat. Arrange banana slices and strawberries evenly over cheese mixture. Brush fruit evenly with melted jelly. Garnish with a mint sprig, if desired. Serve immediately.

Yield: 8 servings; Exchanges per serving: 1/2 starch, 1/2 fruit, 2 fat; Per serving: Calories 162, Carbohydrate 16.9g, Protein 3.2g, Fat 9.2g, Cholesterol 11mg, Fiber 0.9g, Sodium 128mg

America in 1948

- A healthy American breakfast consisted of fried eggs with ham or bacon, and a side of toast smothered with butter.
- Red meat was the favorite dinner entree. Other favorites included stews, creamed tuna, and meatloaf. Deep fryers sat on counter tops next to the toaster.
- Housewives skimmed cream from the top of milk bottles to put in coffee.
- 70% of men and 30% of women smoked.
- The first generation of TV couch potatoes was born.
- Few people did formal exercise.
- One in four men over 55 years old had heart disease.



We did not know that...

- **Smoking** is the No. 1 cause of preventable death.
- **High blood pressure** is not a normal fact of aging.
- **Weight** affects blood pressure.
- **Unhealthy blood cholesterol levels** lead to heart disease.
- **Eating too much saturated fat** leads to unhealthy blood cholesterol levels.
- **Diabetes** is a risk factor for heart disease.
- **Older women** have the same risk of heart disease as older men.

Source: The Framingham Heart Study

READERS WANT TO KNOW...

Q Which is more healthful — butter or margarine?

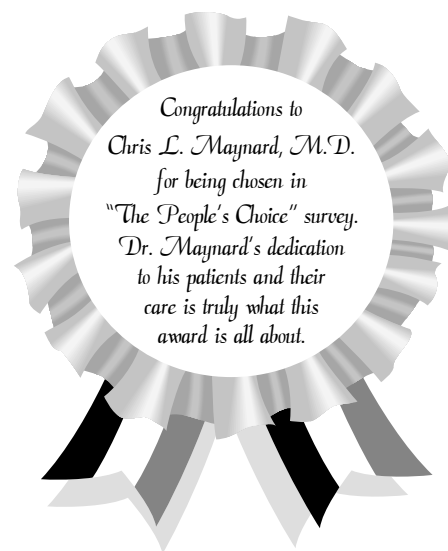
A In a 21-year follow up study, those who had high margarine intakes had a higher risk of coronary heart disease (CHD) than those who weren't big margarine users. In this study, butter intake was not associated with CHD incidence. There's been evidence for some time that the *trans* fatty acids in margarine are a problem — neither heart disease nor cancer researches like them. Both margarine and butter supply about 100 calories per tablespoon. Best Idea: Limit both of these spreads. And don't assume that margarine is "healthier" than butter. *Source: Epidemiology Vol. 8, No. 2*

Q Is weight lifting safe for someone who has had a heart attack?

A Mild to moderate weight training is generally safe if a heart attack was "uncomplicated," with no evidence of ongoing angina, serious heart rhythm irregularities or pumping impairment. Benefits include lowered LDL (bad) cholesterol, increased HDL (good) cholesterol and lowered blood pressure. Mild-to-moderate weight training consists of exercises like chest presses and bicep curls performed two or three times a week for up to 30 minutes. Weights should be heavy enough so that the muscles are fatigued after 10 to 15 repetitions. *Caution: Consult your doctor before starting a weight training program.*

Q How long do hay fever allergy shots provide relief?

A The shots help hay fever symptoms for years after they're discontinued. *Recent finding: Summer hay sufferers who had received shots monthly for three to four years reported a 60% reduction in allergy symptoms for up to three years after the last shot.*



Congratulations to
Chris L. Maynard, M.D.
for being chosen in
"The People's Choice" survey.
Dr. Maynard's dedication
to his patients and their
care is truly what this
award is all about.



"Well, until I can afford your dootsy coil and frizzil rod, just add some transmission fluid and tighten the fan belt."

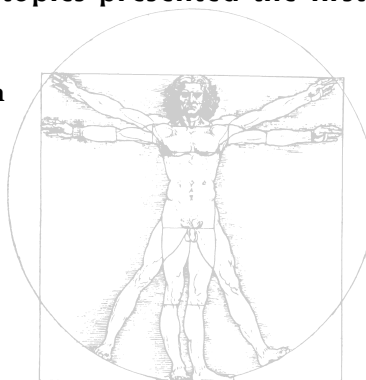
How Your Body Works

A series of health care topics presented the first Tuesday of each month

Cardiovascular System
June 6th

Respiratory System
July 11th

Nervous System
August 8th



Gastrointestinal System
September 12th

Reproductive System
October 10th

Skin, Muscles, Bones
November 14th

Each lecture will focus on a body system, its function, disease and treatment. These educational and informative sessions will be provided without charge by Dr. Sharpe, Dr. Maynard, and Dr. Burroughs from 12 noon to 1:00 PM in the Athens Medical Group East Lobby. Lunch and educational materials will be included. To register, call Angie Barnett at 745-6575, extension 148.

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All AMG physicians are accepting new patients. Same day appointments available.