

Health & Wellbeing

June – Brain health



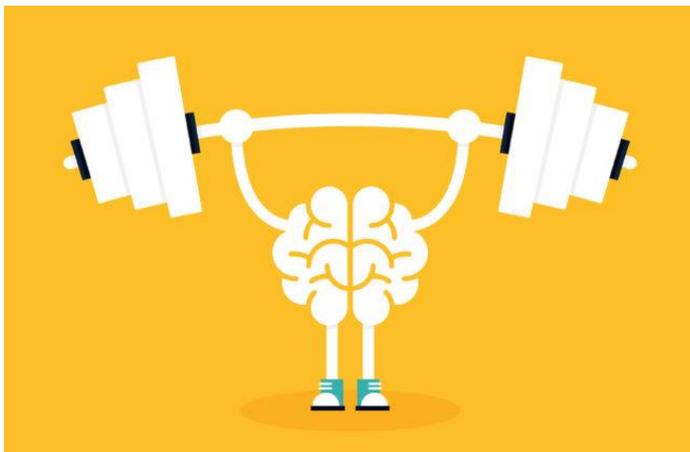
Staying mentally active

Growing older does not mean that your mental abilities will necessarily be reduced. There's a lot you can do to keep your mind sharp and alert. Researchers believe that many of the supposed age-related changes that affect the mind, such as memory loss, are actually lifestyle related.

Improve your mental fitness

The brain is like a muscle - if you don't give it regular workouts, its functions will decline. Suggestions include:

- Keep up your social life and engage in plenty of stimulating conversations.
- Read newspapers, magazines and books.
- Play 'thinking' games like Scrabble, cards and Trivial Pursuit.
- Take a course on a subject that interests you.
- Find a new hobby. Hobbies such as woodwork can improve the brain's spatial awareness.
- Learn a language.
- Do crossword puzzles and word games.
- Play games that challenge the intellect and memory, such as chess.
- Watch 'question and answer' game shows on television, and play along with the contestants.



Boost your memory

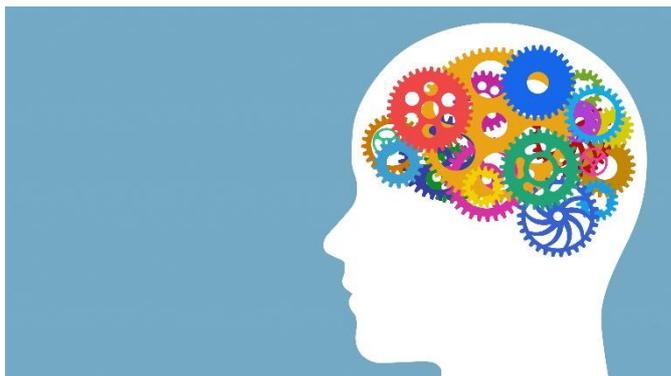
Good recall is a learned skill. There are ways to improve a failing memory no matter what your age. Suggestions include:

- Make sure you're paying attention to whatever it is you want to remember. For example, if you're busy thinking about something else, you mightn't notice where you're putting the house keys.
- Use memory triggers, like association or visualisation techniques. For example, link a name you want to remember with a mental picture.
- Practice using your memory. For example, try to remember short lists, such as a grocery list. Use memory triggers to help you 'jump' from one item to the next. One type of memory trigger is a walking route that you know well. Mentally attach each item on your list to a landmark along the route. For example, imagine putting the bread at the letterbox, the apples at the next-door neighbour's house and the meat at the bus stop. To remember the list, you just have to 'walk' the route in your mind.

Test yourself! Can you crack these riddles?

1. What comes once in a minute, twice in a moment, but never in a thousand years?
2. What coat is best put on wet?
3. A man shaves several times a day but still has a beard. Who is he?
4. How much dirt is in a hole that measures 2 feet by 3 feet by 4 feet?
5. This belongs to you, but everyone else uses it more.
6. What goes all the way around the world, but stays in the corner?
7. What has four fingers and a thumb, but isn't alive?
8. The man who built it doesn't use it, the man who bought it doesn't need it, and the man who uses it doesn't know it. What is it?

The answers are on the next page.



Answers

1. The letter "M"
2. A coat of paint
3. A barber
4. None
5. Your name
6. A stamp
7. A glove
8. A coffin