



Forgetting Something?

Every busy executive forgets something – a name, an appointment, or even where you parked your car. Surprisingly, getting older isn't a major reason for memory loss. The natural process of aging involves a gradual and slow deterioration of the ability of the brain to learn and store new information due to loss of brain cells. Sudden short term loss can be caused by many factors – many of which aren't a sign of dementia or Alzheimer's.

The entire process of storing, processing and recalling information is mainly regulated by our brain with the cerebrum acting as the center of memory. Memory is generally classified into two categories, short term and long term memory. It's good to know that the memory processing and storing capability can be impaired by a number of lifestyle factors. While it's well known that neurodegenerative diseases such as Multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease may cause memory loss, short term memory loss causes vary and can include everything from stress to poor nutrition to overexposure of toxins, such as alcohol or drugs. Scientists have found that illnesses such as diabetes, hypoglycemia or thyroid disorders may cause increased forgetfulness. In some cases, absentmindedness is a side effect of some medications.

We know that an overly stressful lifestyle can create depression or anxiety and is harmful for your physical and mental health, even worse it also causes a state of mental or emotional exhaustion. So, stress essentially overworks your brain, which results in mental fatigue. Another interesting finding was identified by Associate Professor Jeansok Kim while working at the University of Washington's psychology department. He found that stress affected brain cell connections, or synapses, that connect with other cells to form memories and to learn, a concept scientists call brain plasticity. His studies showed that when mice were exposed to stressful noise, their brains responded differently. In fact, the protein called LTP was found in lesser amounts, which is important in forming these connections.

"If you underwent a traumatic stress and then afterwards the information is not processed correctly, then at a later time when it comes time to use that information to make some certain important decision, you may not be able to make the proper decision that you would normally make," Kim stated.

Proper nutrition is also critical for memory maintenance because our brain requires a sufficient supply of neurotransmitters and related nutrients. If



your mind goes blank, your body may be seeking the nutrients needed to nourish these neurotransmitters. And if your blood has high levels of cholesterol and triglycerides, there are smaller amounts of blood and nutrients feeding your brain.

Eating a healthy and balanced diet that includes vitamins B and C can help improve memory. Drinking lots of water daily will help flush toxins from the body, and regular exercise with limited consumption of alcohol and no smoking will improve memory health, too.

If you are worried that your memory loss is a symptom of more than just a bad day – remember to set an appointment with your doctor at Executive MD for a full physical.

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