

# **Your Body Fat Is Robbing You of a Better Memory**

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One thing that most adults fear is the possibility of losing their memory in old age. You may have thought there wasn't much you could do to retain your memory and prevent Alzheimer's disease, but new research is showing a connection between fat and memory loss.

There's even a correlation between the fat in your teen's diet and their academic performance and memory. At any age, it's important to pay attention to fat in your diet and body fat for the healthiest brain.

Modern research is helping us to understand more about this important connection. It's vital that you educate yourself about some of the latest studies and what they could mean for you.

## **Your Brain and Fat**

Fat - in general - is not an enemy to your brain. In fact, most of your brain is actually made from fats. However, these are special fats that have a purpose – not the same kind of fat that sits on your belly.

Your brain cells are called neurons. Each neuron is covered in a membrane that's made from fatty acids. You need to eat fats in order for cells to make this membrane and to keep it strong.

You also have a protective substance in your brain called myelin. Myelin is a covering that helps to keep the signals in your brain from getting crossed. You can think of it like the plastic coating on an electrical cord.

The coating keeps the electricity moving in the right path. Myelin does the same thing for your brain. And myelin is made up of mostly fat. In

order to make myelin, you need to eat fats so that the raw materials are there to make it.

But the wrong kind of fat can actually cause problems for your brain. And carrying too much fat on your body can also cause problems.

### **Saturated Fat in Your Diet**

Recent studies have shown a connection between the saturated fat you eat and plaque on the brain. Plaque on the brain is known to cause problems with memory loss and is evident in patients with Alzheimer's disease.

Research showed that people who had a diet high in saturated fat had higher levels of a protein that can form plaques on the brain. Those involved in the study that had a diet low in saturated fat had lower levels of this same protein.

Though this was a small study, the evidence shows how important it is to be careful about your fat consumption. Saturated fats are more likely to lead to brain problems. They also put you at greater risk for heart disease.

### **A Fatty Diet and the Teenage Brain**

Teens are known for craving junk foods in their diet. But you may not know that there's a link between the foods they eat and their academic achievement. New research has shown that a diet high in fat can actually cause learning and memory to suffer.

A recent study showed that when fed a high fat diet, memory may be impaired. And ADHD has also been linked to a diet high in fat. This is such an important time in development, that it's important to make sure your teen is eating healthy foods low in saturated fat.

If your teen is having trouble in school, you may want to look at the diet first. Many studies have shown that when children eat foods higher in

vitamins and minerals and lower in fat, it can help control behavior problems and improve focus.

### **It's All in the Genes**

The fat you carry on your body can also be related to your memory. A recent study found that a gene that causes fat to accumulate on the body is also related to memory loss. That means if you have this gene, you're more likely to have weight and memory problems concurrently.

The good news is that the people in the study who lost weight actually had improvement in their memory scores. Even though they had a genetic predisposition to memory loss, they were able to improve their health by making lifestyle changes.

In fact, weight loss returned them to average or better than average scores in most cases. We often think that genes dictate what happens to our bodies. But this study shows that genes influence our bodies, but don't always have total control.

### **Avoiding Saturated Fat**

Saturated fat is the type of fat that's solid at room temperature. This is usually found in animal fats. You can find saturated fat in lard, butter, milk, beef, chicken, and pork. You don't have to eliminate these foods from your diet, but it's important to make good choices about them.

Unsaturated fat is liquid at room temperature. This is found in plants and plant based oils. With this type of fat, you actually reduce your risk of disease and improve your health. Unsaturated fat is found in olive oil, canola oil, flaxseed oil, nuts, and other plant foods

Saturated fat is the culprit that causes weight gain and the development of plaque on the brain. Unsaturated fat is the healthy fat that you need in your diet. It's important to understand how you can avoid saturated fat so that your memory doesn't suffer.

First, saturated fat is often found in processed foods that come in boxes or cans. Always check the label and try to find foods that have little or no saturated fat when you go to the grocery store.

Meats also contain saturated fat. You don't have to throw out meat from your diet altogether. However, you should try to minimize red meat and look for lean meats when you purchase them for you and your family.

It's also a good idea to limit red meat to once a week on your family's menu. The other days can include poultry and fish or vegetarian meals. This goes a long way toward reducing the saturated fat in your diet.

You'll also want to avoid foods cooked with lard. Lard is often a hidden ingredient that can be found in beans, tortillas, potato chips, pastries, and even candy. Make sure that you look at the list of ingredients in any foods you eat to make sure they don't contain saturated fat.

### **Don't Go Fat-Free**

There was a time when nutritionists advised a diet low in fat or fat-free. While you need to limit saturated fat, your body requires fat in order to perform many of its processes. And your brain especially needs unsaturated fat in order to protect itself and make healthy connections.

As you work to limit saturated fat, you'll want to make sure you eat plenty of unsaturated healthy fats. Adding fish to your diet is one way to add healthy fat. Eating nuts, cooking with olive oil, and eating fruits with fat such as avocados can help you increase your saturated fat consumption.

About 30% of your diet needs to include healthy fats. Adding flaxseed to your cereal, dipping whole grain breads in olive oil, and eating a handful of nuts for a snack can help you add more.

Whole grain foods also tend to contain oils that are unsaturated and can help improve the health of your brain. These are the best types of carbohydrates you can eat when you want to improve your health.

Avoid products that are labeled as "fat-free" if they aren't naturally fat free. Fat is often taken out of foods and sugar is added to improve flavor. While you may be eating less fat, you are eating sugar - which will be converted into stored fat. Instead, eat less of the full fat versions of foods in order to become satisfied.

### **Eliminate Trans Fat**

Trans fat is actually a man-made type of fat. This comes from taking unsaturated oils and adding hydrogen to them so that they'll stay solid at room temperature. This type of fat is found in foods such as margarine and shortening.

It's also commonly found in packaged, processed foods. This type of fat was once thought to be healthier than saturated fat. However, modern research revealed that it is not only healthier, but it's actually worse for you than saturated fat.

Unlike saturated fat, which is okay in small doses, there's no good amount of trans fat to eat in your diet. In the United States food labels are required to list trans fat. Make sure you check labels and avoid any foods that contain it.

### **Essential Fatty Acids**

Your brain also needs a specific type of fatty acid in order to function at its peak. You need both omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. You need to have the same amount of each in order to have good brain health.

DHA is another type of fatty acid that helps boost brain power. Fatty acids have been shown in research to help improve intelligence. This is

especially true when infants and young children are given these fatty acids.

When you don't have enough fatty acids in your brain, you can suffer from problems such as:

- Depression
- Hyperactivity
- Schizophrenia
- Allergies
- Attention deficit disorder

And you can even suffer from these if you're getting too much of one kind of fatty acid and not enough of the other. Most people have more omega-6 fats in their diets than omega-3 fats. Omega-6 fats come from meat and dairy sources.

For most people, the answer is to add more omega-3 fatty acids. You can do this through your diet by eating less sugar and more fish and flaxseed oils. Many people find that they have better mental health and mental clarity when they restore this type of balance.

### **Supplements for Brain Health**

If you're struggling to eat enough healthy fat in your diet, supplements can help make up the difference. There are a few different supplements that will improve your brain health and help you get the right type of fat.

First, fish oil supplements can be very helpful. They're full of omega-3 fatty acids and can help you have better heart health in addition to helping your brain. Some studies have shown that fish oil is as effective as antidepressants for mental health.

If you choose fish oil supplements, it's important to make sure that they are high quality. Avoid inexpensive generics that don't contain enough quality omega-3 acids to help you.

Flaxseed oil is another supplement that can really improve your brain health. Flaxseed oil is so useful for every part of your body that it won't be stored as fat if you add it to your diet daily.

You can purchase oil capsules or you can even buy the oil and add it to your salads, yogurt, smoothies, or just about any sauce. You shouldn't actually cook with it because high heat can damage the oil. But you can add it to soups or warm foods.

### **Don't Forget Exercise**

Exercise is another important lifestyle factor when it comes to your brain health. Exercise helps raise your good cholesterol levels so that your blood vessels stay clear of plaque. This prevents stroke and helps your brain get better blood flow.

Exercise also helps you maintain a healthy weight. Remember that too much fat on your body can actually contribute to memory problems, so it's important to make sure that you keep your weight as close to ideal as possible.

If you're not much of an exerciser, you can start small with a ten minute walk. Gradually add to that until you're walking at least 30 minutes each day. This simple choice will help improve your brain function and lower your risk for memory loss and Alzheimer's.

A healthy diet and exercise program are key to having better mental health and memory as you age. Memory loss isn't a normal part of aging. It's something that you can absolutely prevent in many cases.

While genetics do play a role in how your brain develops over time, you can often fight your genes by making healthy choices and living a healthy lifestyle. Understanding the relationship between fat in your diet, fat on your body, and your brain function is the first step toward making necessary health changes.



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