



Day In Day Out

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

Is Fat Chewing Away at Your Memory?



Your mind works a lot like a computer. Your brain puts information it judges to be important into “files.” When you remember something, you pull up a file. Memory doesn’t always work perfectly. As people grow older, it may take longer to retrieve those files. Some adults joke about having a “senior moment.”

It’s normal to forget things once in a while. We’ve all forgotten a name, where we put our keys, or if we locked the front door. Seniors who forget things more often than others their age may have mild cognitive impairment. Forgetting how to use the telephone or find your way home may be signs of a more serious problem. These include Alzheimer’s disease or other types of dementia, stroke, depression, head injuries, thyroid problems, or reactions to certain medicines. If you’re worried about your forgetfulness, see your doctor.

The Possible Link Between Trans Fat & Your Memory

The trans fats found in your favorite junk foods aren’t just clogging your arteries: New research shows they might also be messing with your memory.

Young and middle-aged men who ate large amounts of trans fats exhibited a significantly reduced ability to recall words during a memory test, according to findings at the American Heart Association’s annual meeting in Chicago.

Men with the most trans fats in their diet suffered as much as a 10 percent reduction in the words they could recall, the study found.

What are Trans Fats?

Trans fats are a type of dietary fat that has been shown to both increase blood levels of LDL (“bad”) cholesterol and decrease levels of HDL (“good”) cholesterol.

Small levels of trans fats naturally occur in milk and meat products, but artificially created trans fats like partially hydrogenated oils are widely used in processed foods, fast food, baked goods, snack foods, frozen pizza and coffee creamers.



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The researchers studied adults who had not been diagnosed with heart disease, including slightly more than 1,000 men aged 20 or older.

Participants completed a dietary questionnaire, from which the investigators estimated their trans fat consumption.

To assess memory, researchers used a proven test called “recurrent words.” They presented participants with a series of 104 cards with a word on each. Participants had to state whether each word was new or had already appeared on a prior card.

What did the Study Find?

The researchers found that among men younger than 45, those who ate more trans fats showed notably worse performance on the word memory test, even after taking into account factors such as age, education, ethnicity and depression.

Each additional gram a day of trans fats consumed was associated with an estimated 0.76 fewer words correctly recalled.

The researchers hypothesize that the oxidizing effects of trans fats may cause brain cells important to memory to die off. Oxidative stress has been associated with diseases such as heart disease and cancer.

The scientists added that at the same time, the energy-sapping effects of the trans fats may make brain cells more sluggish and less responsive.

The scientists did point out that the study only shows an association between trans fats and memory, not a direct cause-and-effect relationship.

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