

The following information gives you an idea of some of the excellent information that is included in the **Memory Maintenance Newsletters** and also in **The Alzheimer's Alternative** book itself.

Although this information just touches the surface of all that you will learn (the book is over 150 pages!) it will give you a taster of the vast amount of knowledge and insights that you can discover and apply straight away.

There is of course a lot more in the book...

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Activities That Alzheimer's Sufferers Should / Could Be Involved With.

One of the major problems faced by those suffering from Alzheimer's disease or any of the dementias is the periods of loneliness, boredom and frustration.

It is therefore important for both the sufferer and the carer that these “empty times” are as few and far between as possible. This not only gives the carer some respite (knowing that the person they are looking after is somewhat occupied) but also reduces the amount of time that the sufferer has trying to occupy himself in activities such as wandering.

When possible try to fill these empty times with activities that are creative, helpful and enriching but also those that are both physically and mentally rewarding.

The following list of ideas is not exhaustive and you may find that some of the activities are more applicable to your situation than others. You may also have favourite past-times of your own that you may wish to use and that's fine as every situation and case is unique. However, these ideas will give you a starting point in finding activities that will stimulate the mind, involve physical activity or that can just be used to occupy the odd moment.

Music and Films

Anything that involves music is particularly useful and easy to carry out. These may be activities that involve just listening to music and watching music videos / DVDs or musicals, to joining in and singing along to particularly older, well known songs.

It is possible to take the singing of songs further and incorporate it in to various games. These may include things such as “Name that Tune” where either a certain number of notes are played or lyrics sung and someone has to try and guess the song (and they can then complete it should they wish by singing the rest). A song title could be given that has a word missing and someone has to try to fill in the blank, or even you could try to name songs by certain artists and singers in a form of “who sung what”.

Depending on the amount of dementia or past interests activities can also include playing musical instruments especially rhythm instruments (as a side note music therapy can be very beneficial with regards to some of the behavioural problems that are often associated with dementia), dancing or even playing a role in local or nursing home shows, productions and plays – as long as the role is not too taxing or over stimulating. If you feel this may be a little too much then it is possible to just to attend various shows, plays, pantomimes etc.

Films, television and DVDs can not only be nostalgic but also useful, informative and an aid to memory retention and cognition. By watching and discussing films it is possible to open up conversation and debate but also reminisce on past personal history and events. These topics may be former occupations (first job, pay etc.), past holidays or anniversaries, significant historical events of the time, great inventions or breakthroughs, war related events – such as military service or work in other related organisations.

These discussions can then lead on to asking for advice and information regarding your own work or related events (even if the advice is not used the person giving it still feels involved and of use) and the discussions can be ever growing to even include help with every day activities.

Craft and Hobby Activities

Crafts and hobbies are an excellent way to not only produce something creative and of sentimental value but also keep the mind active, increase dexterity and also occupy some time for both the carer and the sufferer. Again, this list whilst not being exhaustive will give you some ideas of past-times that may be applicable to your own circumstances.

Playing cards is a good starting point for anyone suffering dementia as it can improve memory, hand – eye co-ordination, hand dexterity and be either a solo, paired or group activity. Solo games such as “Patience” can fill many an hour whilst paired and group games can range from simple memory games such as pairing the cards (or “Fish”), to “Snap” continuing up to bridge and poker depending on the ability and severity of the sufferer.

Also, it is worth thinking about crossword puzzles word searches, word association games, brainteasers, puzzles and memory exercises – there is an entire industry based now on “brain training” with various computer software available to keep the mind active. It may surprise you to realise

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that it was the work of Professor Kawashima in Kyoto that has led to the development of Nintendo's DS console for brain training.

The computer game is based on his research into Alzheimer's disease and how simple tasks that are performed on a daily basis actually improve mental functioning and conditioning over time. At one of Japan's memory loss clinic they actually give copies of his books and these games consoles to their patients to use at home!

One important thing to note is that for better results the games you choose to participate in must get harder as you go along. If you like cross-word puzzles make sure that the difficulty is increased over a period of time so that the mind is stretched and pushed to its ever increasing limits!

The following few pages give you some ideas as to games and logical puzzles that are easy to implement and carry out. These ideas are from an excellent book called "What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About Alzheimer's Disease: The Complete Guide to Preventing, Treating, and Coping with Memory Loss" by Gayati Devi and Deborah Mitchell and it is well worth a read for other "brain boosting activities you may want to consider.

All of these activities require very little in the way of materials – just a pen, paper and a stopwatch or clock. What is better is that they can all be carried out at little or no cost and you should start to notice an improvement if you just invest 30 minutes of your time a couple of days per week.

Anagrams

On a piece of paper write down a long, polysyllabic word (like "paraphernalia") at the top of the page in bold – this is your starting point. Then write down as many words as you can make from this word in 15-20 minutes by moving the letters around. Try to make words that are at least three letters long (the longer the better) and you can include proper names (names of people, places, things) as well as foreign words – just don't make them up!

For example, "hernia", "nail", "pear", and "air" are words that can be made from "paraphernalia" when you rearrange the letters.

Here are some other polysyllabic words (and a few ideas as to words that you can make from them) to get you started:

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Administration: station, mini, ration, mind
Autobiographical: auto, graph, photo, tool
Bacteriological: logical, bacteria, glacier, broil
Depolarization: polar, deport, ratio, trapezoid
Epidemiological: logical, gloom, damp
Individualistic: dual, individual, vial, last
Participatory: party, tapioca, captor, tray
Rationalization: ration, nation, lion, riot
Sentimental: sentiment, mental, listen
Totalitarianism: total, talisman, militant, raisin

Categories

On your piece of paper, write the name of a specific category at the top. For example, “Wild Animals”, “Boy’s Names”, “Sports” etc. and then for 15-20 minutes write down as many items as you can in that category.

If you get stuck after a while this is okay because it allows you to ask questions that can also be used as memory joggers. For example if you chose “Wild Animals” and you've listed twelve animals but can't think of any others try asking yourself the following questions for a little bit more stimulation....

- What types of animals have I seen at the zoo?
- What types of animals have I seen at a circus?
- Which animals live in Africa?
- Which animals have I ever seen while on vacation?
- Which animals do some people hunt?

Another way to jump-start your brain and “get those juices flowing” is to take each letter of the alphabet and think about which animal begins with that letter. For example if you chose the letter “A” you might say “aardvark”, “anteater” or “antelope.” For “B,” you might list “bear”, “buffalo,” and “baboon”.

Here are some other categories you can use for your sessions – but you can always pick others if nothing appeals to you, or you cannot think of any examples to fit the category – you can always come back to it later!

- Cars,
- Birds,
- Flowers,

- Trees,
- Countries,
- Types of dog / breeds,
- Girl's names,
- Mammals,
- Colours.

Word Associations

Make a list of five to ten nouns, one word to a line, down the left side of your paper, leaving several blank spaces between each word. Then list five words that are associated with each of the nouns.

For example, if one of the nouns you chose is "Polar Bear", you might list the following associated words: white, furry, Alaska, North Pole, animal.

It is easy to make a list of nouns (despite what you may be thinking) and to get you started here are some ways to get ideas:

- Look around you: what's in the room you're in? Perhaps there's a sofa, lamp, bookshelves, stereo or television? If you're outside there may be cars, trees, lamp posts, gardens or houses. So already we have ten words to get you started!
- Picture in your mind your favourite place to visit and list all the objects that you see. If you enjoy the beach then things that you may include might be sand dunes, seagulls, shells, umbrellas and waves.
- List five or ten gifts you would like to receive or give to someone else.
- List five foods in your refrigerator and five items in your bedroom closet.
- List five nouns that begin with "A" and five that begin with "B". You can continue at each session using two different letters of the alphabet for up to thirteen weeks!
- List five things you'd find in a grocery store and five things you'd find in a hardware store.

If this gets to easy then to stretch the imagination a little further you may wish to increase the number of nouns associated with each object. You could start with just five nouns and build up to ten or if that is still too easy challenge yourself and try to list even more.

Memory Joggers **- Ideas That May Help**

1. The first thing to remember is that everyone has memory lapses (some more than others!), and at one time or another we have all gone into a room only to have forgotten why – and then to have remembered once again after we have left and gone elsewhere! The reason I mention this is this; as you will recall the more you got stressed at the time about trying to remember, the worse the situation became and the harder it was to recall what it was you were after. The same is true for those that you may be caring for. Therefore, avoid rushing or putting pressure on either yourself (in future!) or the family member or friend you may be caring for as this only makes the situation worse and makes remembering that much harder.

2. Focus on one activity at a time and keep to it until it is complete. To misquote an old proverb “a job completed by hand is worth two in the bush (or future!).

3. Buy a notebook, diary and pen for yourself, relative or friend to write down important information, conversations, shopping lists, things to do or instructions.

This can also be kept by the telephone so that messages / conversations can be written down as they take place and important information will not be forgotten (also keep important telephone numbers by the 'phone so that they are always in easy reach.

4. Using your notebook (or a wipe clean blackboard or whiteboard) it is also useful to leave notes, messages and reminders behind (if you are a carer) when you are going out informing your loved one of where you are going, why you are going and when you will return.

5. Keep a visible watch or clock (with a large face for easy viewing) and calendar so that changes in the day, date, month and year can be noted and recorded. Use the calendar to make a note of all the important dates, anniversaries, appointments etc. which once recorded can then be used as a reminder. Cross out or mark off the days as they pass to keep a visual record of the time, date, seasons etc.

6. Make sure that you get a daily newspaper and then throw out the old ones. This will help you to keep track of the days and establish a routine whilst keeping your mind active – and you never know you may always

find something of interest in it as well!

7. It is possible to get pill dispensers or holders for tablets that also have the days of the weeks and times on them – this is again another useful way to keep track of time but more importantly they can be vital in helping the sufferer keep track of taking the right pill at the right time.

It is also possible to either set an alarm clock / radio or purchase an electronic reminder to sound at the appropriate time for medications to be taken – again handy for establishing a daily routine.

8. There is nothing wrong with routine, doing things in the same order or by habit and using check-lists if necessary as this helps to keep up some independence and self reliance wherever possible.

9. Tidy up and remove any junk from cupboards, work surfaces and drawers (I believe they call this de-cluttering or being “minimalistic”!) as this helps to minimise confusion for those being cared for. Avoid re-organising familiar things as this may create confusion and try to keep keys, glasses, money, remote controls etc. in the same place as this helps establish a routine and a pattern of knowing where the most common objects are.

10. Label all drawers and cupboards so that the person you are caring for knows where important things are kept. Make sure that you keep each item in one place as this helps establish a routine. Don't hide things (also known as “putting things in a safe place”) as it may cause confusion.

Before I leave the section on mental activity and improved thinking, I just want to say a little word about stress and depression. Studies have shown a clear link between depression and a decrease in memory recall. One important study has shown that the leading cause of deteriorating memory amongst their volunteers was depression and not in fact Alzheimer's disease.

Therefore it is all the more reason to keep both the sufferer and the carer as active both mentally and physically as possible to alleviate boredom and prevent depression from setting in. If you would like to try to improve depression with the use of supplements it is worth noting that vitamins B1, B3, B6, B12 and biotin are naturally involved in the production of serotonin – the good mood hormone!

One final word for the carers (and also the sufferer), I read in a research

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paper that when they are trying to find individuals for studies and trials who are suffering stress the first people they seek are those that are caring for someone with Alzheimer's – because they feel there isn't anything more stressful than being a carer in these circumstances.

Unfortunately, when the body is undergoing stress it produces tremendous amounts of the hormone cortisol which damages the part of the brain involved with memory production (the hippocampus). One of the research papers published in the Journal of Neuroscience in 2006 actually stated that high levels of cortisol caused Alzheimer's disease and were not present because of it as had been previously thought .

For this reason I would recommend that you consider taking up some of the many relaxation techniques that are on offer whether it is relaxation CDs, hypnotherapy, tai-chi or yoga. You will definitely feel the benefit both now and in the long run!

Vital Vitamins for Protecting yourself from Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia.

The Vitamin C and E Combination

An article published in the International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry (1) showed that all Alzheimer's sufferers had low blood plasma concentrations of vitamin C no matter how good their diet was. It also showed and that the lower the concentrations the worse their thinking or cognition was but they were unable to explain why this was. It maybe due to problems with absorption, or the vitamin C is being used up more quickly amongst those suffering with dementia but regardless of the reason they knew it was important.

This study supports the theory that vitamin C is vital in reducing the damage done by free radicals within the body and the brain itself. Vitamin C is a powerful anti-oxidant and coupled with vitamin E the results are even far more impressive (but I will cover that in just a moment).

Researchers have also discovered that vitamin C enhances the effect of medications used to treat dementia allowing the drugs to pass more easily into the brain and therefore have a greater effect. A study published in the Journal of Medicinal Chemistry in 2002 showed that certain drugs were prevented from entering the brain by the blood-brain barrier (a control filter that prevents harmful materials entering the brain and central nervous system) but with the addition of vitamin C this filtering

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mechanism was overcome.

As well as being a powerful anti-oxidant and removing free radicals from the body, vitamin C is also involved in over 300 hundred metabolic processes that are vital for health. Some of these processes are extremely important in the prevention of dementia and Alzheimer's. For example, vitamin C lowers your level of bad cholesterol whilst raising your level of good cholesterol, helps your body detox heavy metals, helps in the metabolisms of carbohydrates, lowers blood pressure and reduces atherosclerosis or hardening of the arteries.

So, regardless of how good your diet is a supplementation of vitamin C may prove very beneficial. If you are going to try a supplement you may as well add vitamin E to – you'll be glad that you did (as I will show you now)...

A study in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition (2) showed that vitamin E intake was inversely proportional to the incidence of Alzheimer's disease – i.e. the more you took the less likely you were to suffer from the condition. The study also showed that increased levels of vitamin E could reverse the symptoms of Alzheimer's.

Vitamin E also acts as a powerful antioxidant by neutralizing free radicals in the body that cause tissue and cell damage. As well as this vitamin E also contributes to a healthy circulatory system and aids in proper blood clotting and may decrease the risk of Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) by slowing the development of atherosclerosis.

It therefore makes sense to take a supplement of vitamins C and E – but it makes even more sense to take them together! In fact, a study in 2006 by the Johns Hopkins University showed that those who took a combination of vitamin C and E supplements over a six-year period had a significantly lower risk of developing Alzheimer's.

Recommendation

A daily dose of 2500-3000mg of vitamin C and up to 800mg of vitamin E may prove beneficial in reducing and slowing the effects of Alzheimer's and other dementias.

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Mediterranean diet found to have further Alzheimer's benefits.

There is yet more evidence that eating more healthily can dramatically enhance cognition. Research based on researchers' observations of 192 Alzheimer's sufferers over a four and a half years and published in the journal *Neurology* shows that eating a Mediterranean diet could allow sufferers of Alzheimer's disease to live longer than patients who eat a more traditional Western diet.

During the study period researchers found that those subjects that stuck to the Mediterranean diet most closely were over 75% less likely to die than those that followed the diet the least.

According to the study's author Nikos Scarmeas of Columbia University Medical Centre in New York "Alzheimer's patients who adhered to the diet to a moderate degree lived an average 1.3 years longer than those people who least adhered to the diet. And those Alzheimer's patients who followed the diet very religiously lived an average four years longer."

Previous research by the same author has also shown that greater adherence to a Mediterranean-style diet could cut the risk of healthy people developing Alzheimer's disease by 68 percent.

As you will recall from the **Alzheimer's Alternative** the Mediterranean diet is rich in cereals, wine, fruits, nuts, legumes and whole grains, fish and olive oil – providing an excellent source of beta-carotene, vitamin C, tocopherols, polyphenols and essential minerals all of which offer protection against Alzheimer's.

The Mediterranean diet has also been linked to longer life, less heart disease, and protection against some cancers and the tide of scientific literature to back-up its healthfulness has started to trickle into the mainstream consciousness.

More research will need to be done to find out exactly which parts of the Mediterranean diet offer the most benefits but if it really can help Alzheimer's patients have slower rates of cognitive decline, maintain their daily living skills, and have a better quality of life then I would suggest that there is little point in waiting and would recommend you start on it right away.

Fish and Wine – The perfect combination!

You will be aware from reading the **Alzheimer's Alternative** that moderate alcohol consumption is beneficial in improving cognition. You will also be aware that the omega 3 oils from fish are also beneficial – in fact it has been known for years that fish is “brain food”. But now it appears that together they really do produce a double whammy!

Researchers from the Catholic University of Campobasso in Italy have just published a study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* showing that moderate alcohol drinking acts like a “trigger” boosting and enhancing the production of omega-3 fatty acids in our body even when fish consumption is low.

Dr Romina di Giuseppe, who led the study, said: “People drinking moderate amounts of alcohol, one drink a day for women and two for men, had higher concentration of omega-3 fatty acids in plasma and red blood cells independently of their fish intake”.

The key here is the word moderate.

In this study the best results came from wine drinking and the daily amount for best results was one glass a day for women and two glasses a day for men.

The study involved 1600 volunteers from 3 countries and even though the group contained those that ate very little in the way of fish they still achieved increases in their circulating omega 3 oils.

Just imagine what could have been achieved if they had added extra fish to the equation!

Consuming fish like tuna, salmon or mackerel three times a week reduces harmful brain lesions which can trigger Alzheimer's disease and strokes by over one quarter (26%) a 5 year research study from Finland has shown – but only if it is not fried.

Jyrki Virtanen, who led this particular study at the University of Kuopio in Finland, said: “While eating tuna and other types of fish seems to help protect against memory loss and stroke, these results were not found in people who regularly ate fried fish. More research is needed as to why these types of fish may have protective effects, but the omega-3 fatty acids would seem to have a major role.”

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So not only is this email informative it also helps you plan your evening meal – a nice grilled tuna steak or a piece of smoked salmon, a glass of wine and you're all set for a healthy night in!

Celery can reduce brain inflammation and improve Alzheimer's disease.

A study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences has shown that a chemical found in celery can help to reduce brain inflammation which may have a vital role to play in the treatment of neurological diseases and auto-immune system disorders such as Alzheimer's disease and multiple sclerosis.

The chemical compound in question is a specific flavonoid called Luteolin (which is also found in green peppers, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, spinach and thyme) has a powerful effect on excessive brain inflammation according to researchers from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

This brain inflammatory response when controlled is not bad for the body – in fact it performs a vital role in organising the body's immune system enabling to fight of germs or infection etc. helping to prevent us from getting sick. But when the response goes wrong or is heightened for a prolonged period of time then that is when it proves detrimental as it can diminish learning and memory and cause nerve cells to self destruct.

In two separate experiments researchers firstly took microglia cells (which are vital to immune defence) from rats and exposed them to harmful bacteria cells. They then exposed these cells to the luteolin compounds and noted that the excessive inflammation observed was reduced.

Secondly, they laced another group of rats drinking water with luteolin for three weeks before injecting the rats with a bacteria known to cause inflammation in the brain. Within only four hours after injecting the rats with the bacterium the amount of inflammation in the brain (particularly in the hippocampus region – an area that is vital for memory storage and often affected by Alzheimer's disease) had already reduced.

The researchers attribute these reductions to luteolin and one of the researchers involved in the study remarked that “This was just about as potent an inhibition as anything we had seen previously” and that “if you had the potential to decrease the production of inflammation in the brain

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you could potentially limit the cognitive deficits that result.”

Of course more research needs to be done, but this is another truly exciting finding that proves the effects that changes in diet (like the ones I cover in the Alzheimer's Alternative) can have on not only on maintaining normal brain function but on reversing changes that may already be taking place.

In the meantime, I usually recommend 4 sticks of celery a day – cooked or raw it doesn't matter – as a starting point to better health!

Belly fat does not equal belly laughs!

In the **Alzheimer's Alternative** I talk a lot about the effects that small changes in diet and exercise can make to maintaining the power of you brain and preventing it from deteriorating.

But now I want to cover it again from a slightly different angle....

Belly fat.... Middle Age Spread.... The “Pooh Bear” tummy.... “Love handles” call it what you will but it is not doing you any good.

About 50% of all adults carry excess abdominal fat and unfortunately these people are at a greater risk of developing diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, strokes and now, according to new research, dementia.

A study published in the journal of Neurology in 2008 showed that subjects who developed the most abdominal belly fat were three times more likely to develop dementia than those with the least fat around their middle.

The research was carried out on more than 6,500 subjects all in their early 40's and then re-evaluated 30 years later also showed that those who were largest around the middle but were otherwise healthy, non-smokers and within normal weight limits **still** had a higher risk of dementia.

So what can you do about it...?

Well three things are obvious:

1, Moderate exercise at least 3 times a week for 30 minutes – just enough to get the heart pumping.

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2, Reduce your food intake – don't starve yourself but remember that the more calories you consume (as a general rule) the greater your chances of dementia. Ask yourself if you really need that extra biscuit!

3, Because abdominal fat is a very good indicator of the amount of inflammation that is going on in the body it is worth topping up on your anti-oxidants such as pycnogenol and vitamin E.

As you will discover...

There is a lot, lot more to discover in
The Alzheimer's Alternative...

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and learn what you can do to help you and your loved ones.

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