

The

Liker Health Report



Keeping People Focused on Staying Fit & Healthy

Spring 2022

Poor Mental Focus & Impaired Cognitive Functioning

Getting to the Root of Brain Fog for Better Mental Wellness

At one time or another, most people have experienced what they'll describe as 'brain fog,' or a temporary feeling of mental fuzziness and/or sluggishness. According to professor and clinical psychologist Sabrina Romanoff, PsyD, "Brain fog feels like a lack of mental clarity; it can affect your ability to focus and make it difficult for you to recall things." For many people, the loss of mental sharpness makes them feel unlike their normal selves and can become quite distressing if not resolved. Some may feel as if they are developing a serious condition related to neurocognitive decline or dementia.

Brain fog isn't technically a medical condition, but can be a symptom of other medical or health conditions; or a side effect of a medication used to treat a medical condition (i.e., anxiety, hypertension, allergies, nausea, sleep problems); or even a nutrient deficiency (i.e., vitamin B12). Lack of sleep and increased stress are the usual suspects, and also typically the most easily remedied via lifestyle changes. Chronic conditions such as multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia, depression, and thyroid disorders are known to precipitate the feeling of brain fog. Perimenopausal women frequently report experiencing brain fog; this is attributed to fluctuating hormone levels. Brain fog is also showing up in patients who've had a recent viral infection, such as COVID-19, SARS, or H1N1. Some people experience more than one of these conditions simultaneously, or one condition goes hand-in-hand with another, such as depression interfering with sleep and lack of sleep and increased stress leading to depression. It can be a vicious cycle and frequently requires a comprehensive medical evaluation. Check with your doctor if your brain fog has become persistent or problematic in your daily life.

The 6 Pillars of Brain Health

- 1. PHYSICAL EXERCISE** improves blood flow and memory, enhances learning and mood, and decreases risk of Alzheimer's disease.
- 2. ANTIOXIDANT-RICH DIET**, such as Mediterranean-style, helps prevent brain cell damage.
- 3. DISEASE MANAGEMENT** of obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, hypertension, and depression lowers dementia risk.
- 4. GOOD QUALITY SLEEP** improves the immune system, invigorates the body and mind, and may reduce beta-amyloid plaque in the brain.
- 5. MENTAL EXERCISE** improves brain function, promotes growth of new brain cells, and decreases risk of dementia.
- 6. SOCIAL INTERACTION** helps protect against memory decline/loss.

RESEARCH PEARLS: Bacteria and Alzheimer's Disease

Researchers from Griffith University in Australia have shown that a bacteria (*Chlamydia pneumoniae*) which is commonly present in the nose can cross the blood-brain barrier and set off a cascade of reactions that could potentially lead to Alzheimer's disease (AD). *Chlamydia pneumoniae* is typically known as a respiratory tract pathogen, but it also has the ability to infect the central nervous system. In fact, previous studies have shown that several different species of bacteria are capable of entering the central nervous system through the nerves that run between the nasal cavity and the brain. This occurs rapidly — within 24 hours. The new research in mice demonstrated that once *Chlamydia pneumoniae* infiltrated the central nervous system, it was only a matter of days before the brain cells reacted by depositing beta amyloid peptide, the hallmark plaque characteristic of AD. *Chlamydia pneumoniae* is likely not the sole cause of AD, but a contributing factor. Research is ongoing.

Scientific Reports. 2022 Feb 17;12(1):2759.

The “Other” Vaccines

Recommended Vaccines for Adults Over 50

As COVID-19 transitions from ‘pandemic’ to ‘endemic,’ it’s a good time to review any routine vaccines you may have delayed in the last two years. By virtue of age and/or a pre-existing condition(s), getting the recommended vaccinations is crucial for better health outcomes. Should you become infected, vaccination is key to more mild symptoms and a quicker recovery. Furthermore, anyone suffering with long COVID may have additional challenges atop their exhaustion, cognitive problems, and debilitating symptoms.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends four standard adult vaccines: influenza, pneumonia, shingles, and tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis. Due to waning protection over time, some vaccines are considered booster doses. In the case of the flu shot, an annual dose is required to address both waning protection and more significantly, because the circulating viruses change (mutate) from year to year.

Vaccine: INFLUENZA

The standard formulation is recommended annually for adults 50 to 64. Adults over 65 should receive either the ‘high dose’ version (4x the amount of antigens) or the adjuvanted version which prompts a more robust immune response.

Vaccine: PNEUMONIA

A single shot is recommended for adults 65 and older. Anyone younger than 65 who has a chronic health condition should receive a vaccination if advised by a physician.

Vaccine: SHINGLES

Adults 50 and older should have 2 doses of the vaccine with 2-6 months between doses.

Vaccine: TETANUS/DIPHTHERIA/PERTUSSIS (Tdap)

All adults should have a Tdap booster, followed by a Td (tetanus/diphtheria) booster every 10 years. Anyone who suffers a puncture wound should receive a Td booster if it has been longer than 5 years since the last vaccination.

Travel outside the United States may require additional vaccines against diseases that are endemic to the destination country. Check with your physician if you have travel plans abroad. You can also check the CDC’s website for travel guidance: wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list.

A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.

Lao Tzu

Dear Dr. Liker...

What is the association between sugar consumption and facial wrinkles?



The sugars in foods we eat are involved in a process called glycation. The sugar molecules can attach themselves to various proteins in the body, including collagen in the skin. This alters the structure of the collagen so that it becomes rigid, and the skin becomes less supple and more brittle. In turn, this contributes to accelerated wrinkle formation.

Wrinkles caused by glycated collagen are distinctly cross-hatched in their appearance, rather than the parallel, less noticeable appearance of the garden variety fine lines and wrinkles associated with aging skin. The aesthetically unattractiveness of the cross-hatched facial wrinkles causes people to look much older than their actual age. To further compound the problem is the gradual loss of bone and supportive tissue (muscle and fat) in the face.

Although this tissue ‘shrinkage’ is normal, glycation doesn’t have to be. Some glycation occurs normally, albeit on a smaller scale, simply due to the breakdown of carbohydrates in the digestive tract. It’s the excess simple sugar consumption which is problematic. So if you want to keep wrinkles at bay, avoid sugar (and its many forms) as much as possible. That means desserts, candy, sodas, lattes, fruit juices, and the table sugar you add to your home-brewed coffee or tea.

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