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Memory-Loss Epidemic: 8 Ways to Protect Yourself

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By Lynn Allison

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The number of people with Alzheimer's and related disorders of the brain will double by 2050, according to the Alzheimer's Association. Indeed, many experts say memory loss in America has reached epidemic proportions.

There are many theories why more people seem to be losing cognitive skills at a younger age, but experts say there are simple measures you can take to protect yourself.

Gary Small, M.D., professor of psychiatry at UCLA and author of *The Memory Bible*, tells Newsmax Health: "Although aging is the greatest risk factor for memory loss, there's a lot people can do to keep their brains healthy and sharp. There is compelling scientific evidence that lifestyle changes and gently challenging the brain can keep your memory sharper, longer."

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Here are eight ways to protect yourself from the memory-loss epidemic:

- **Review your medications.** Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., author of *Real Cause, Real Cure*, says that autopsies of Alzheimer's patients yielded a shocking discovery – nearly half of them DID NOT have the dreaded disease. Researchers believe many of them were cognitively impaired by the medications they were taking before they died. "Drugs can cause loss of brain function," he tells Newsmax Health.

Among the most common culprits are statins, anti-anxiety drugs, painkillers, beta-blockers, and sleep medications. Review your medications with your doctor and discuss the possible effects they may be having on your memory.
- **Take precautions against head injuries.** Head injuries can cause memory loss right before, during, and after the accident. Wear a helmet when biking or playing a contact sport. If you hit your head hard, don't continue the activity. Rest and seek medical attention.
- **Avoid metabolic syndrome.** Folks with excess fat around their waist, high blood pressure, high blood sugar levels, high triglycerides, and low levels of HDL (good cholesterol), suffer from this condition, which has been linked to cognitive decline. Dr. Ellen Kamhi, author of *The Natural Medicine Chest*, says that daily exercise and a low-fat, fiber-rich diet reduces risk of metabolic syndrome.
- **Get diabetes under control.** A recent study revealed that complications from diabetes can increase the risk of Alzheimer's by 65 percent. Type-2 diabetes can be prevented by eating right, controlling weight, and getting exercise.
- 5. **Get plenty of sleep.** Sleep disorders can deplete your memory, says Kamhi. For example, sleep apnea can lead to learning and memory problems. See your doctor about treatment options.
- 6. **Take fish oil.** Experts say you can reduce your risk of memory loss by eating omega-3 fatty acids found in fish and fish oil or taking supplements. A commonly recommended dosage of fish oil is 900 mg a day.
- **Exercise.** "Physical activity brings more oxygen to the brain," says Dr. Kamhi.

8. **Challenge your brain.** Learn a new language, do puzzles, read difficult books, take a class – do anything that requires your brain to work. Do everyday activities in a new, more challenging way. For example, if you are right handed, brush your teeth with your left hand. Research shows that a hard-working brain is usually a healthy brain.

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