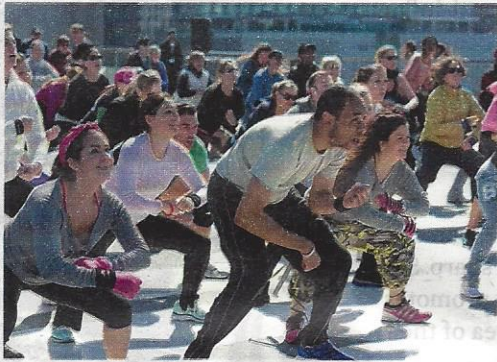


## Health Shots Alzheimer's News

**Better than drugs** Sustained exercise may be able to slow or even reverse the biological changes that cause dementia, according to new research presented at the 2015 Alzheimer's Association International Conference in Washington. Researchers assigned 65 sedentary men and women with memory loss to either regular aerobic



exercise or stretching for 45 minutes four times a week over six months. The aerobic exercise not only improved thinking but also reduced levels of toxic tau protein in the brain. "No currently approved medication can rival these effects," said lead author Laura Baker of Wake Forest School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, N.C.

**Loneliness hurts** Feeling lonely is bad for your brain. Researchers studied 8,300 men and women 65 and older and found that

those who reported feeling the loneliest had a 20 percent faster decline in mental ability than those who said they weren't lonely. Lead author Nancy Donovan of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston speculates the psychological stress of loneliness may cause harmful brain inflammation.

**A spit test for Alzheimer's?** Molecules in saliva may be able to help doctors identify brain changes linked to Alzheimer's disease. Researchers at the University of Alberta studied 6,000 metabolites—tiny molecules that are byproducts of metabolism—and found that certain combinations of compounds were more common in those with Alzheimer's.

**Women at risk** Women are twice as likely to get Alzheimer's disease as men, but doctors have assumed it was simply because women live longer. Now emerging research suggests there may be biological differences that put women at higher risk than men. One new study from Duke University found that women with memory problems declined twice as fast as men with the condition, possibly due to hormonal or genetic mechanisms. —Elizabeth Agnvall

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### MEMORY QUIZ: How did you do?

*If you answered:*

**YES to 2, 4, 6, 8 or 10** You are either showing signs of normal memory loss due to aging, or some other factor is affecting your memory. "If somebody is forgetting where they leave their keys, where they park their car, the name of an object—those are age-related memory impairments," says Michael Rafii, director of the Memory Disorders Clinic at the University of California in San Diego. Stress, sleep deprivation and grief can also affect your memory, but cognitive function tends to improve once the

underlying stressor improves. And that tip-of-the-tongue forgetfulness (question 2)? Scientists call this blocking, and it becomes more normal as we age—as do gaps in attention, which can lead to misplaced items (phones, wallets) or forgotten appointments. Don't worry too much, but don't ignore the memory loss either. If you feel like your memory might be getting worse, you may need to be checked for other conditions such as depression. **YES to 1, 3, 5, 7 or 9** "When people start to forget information that they previously would have remembered, that's worrisome," says Ronald Petersen, director of the Mayo Clinic

Alzheimer's Disease Research Center in Rochester, Minn. Telling the same stories at every party is fine, but repeating a question within the same hour may signal a problem. Trouble recognizing everyday objects, putting things in unusual places and problems keeping track of finances are common warning signs of serious memory loss. Family members are often the first to notice symptoms, Petersen says, so listen to their concerns. And talk to your doctor about having your memory tested.

#### **NO to all the questions?**

That's fantastic. Keep doing what you're doing. Your brain health is most likely excellent.



## Is My Memory Normal?

Take our quiz to find out

By Elizabeth Agnvall

By age 60, more than a third of us worry about our memory. If you're one of them, take our quiz, which we developed with input from brain health experts. Of course, this is not meant to be diagnostic. If you have concerns, it's always a good idea to talk to your doctor.

**1.** The kids or grandkids show up for Sunday dinner—and you completely forgot they were coming.

YES  NO

**2.** You run into your neighbor and start to ask about his daughter, but you can't remember her name—until later.

YES  NO

**3.** You sometimes look in the mirror and don't recognize yourself.

YES  NO

**4.** You always miss the turn to the grandkids' regular soccer field.

YES  NO

**5.** You find your glasses in the freezer, your watch in the sink or other objects in strange places.

YES  NO

**6.** Your friend told you some great news about his wife's new job. You were certain he told you during lunch, but turns out he told you over the phone.

YES  NO

**7.** You've always known where every penny was, but now your bills are a complete mess.

YES  NO

**8.** You made a doctor appointment for a check-up months ago but completely forgot it.

YES  NO

**9.** Your spouse tells you that you ask the same questions repeatedly.

YES  NO

**10.** Your mother recently passed away. You're having trouble sorting through her papers.

YES  NO