

## Exercise regularly

Physical exercise may be good for your body, but it can also improve your ability to process and remember different kinds of information. It increases oxygen to your brain and reduces the risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease, which may lead to memory loss. Exercise also improves the way your brain functions and your mood.

## Keep on learning

Remember school holidays when your mother nagged you to keep reading your school books when all you wanted to do was watch TV? Well, you probably should've listened to your mom. The brain is like a muscle – if you don't use it, it becomes weak and forgetful. This is why you should keep it active, learn new things and read up on world events.

## Meditate

Stress is the brain's worst enemy. It can even destroy brain cells. Meditation helps curb stress levels, it helps improve focus, concentration, creativity, learning and reasoning skills. It also increases the thickness of the cerebral cortex (the area in the brain associated with feelings of happiness), and encourages more connections between brain cells – all of which increase mental sharpness and memory ability.

### FAKING IT! TOP READERS' TIPS

'I stick calendar reminders and shopping lists on my phone. It's always with me and a great way to set up repeat appointments.' – **Sue Gates, Port Elizabeth**

'I switch my wedding ring onto my other hand when I have to remember something specific. When I see it on the wrong hand, I remember why I put it there.' – **Lisa Boshoff, Waterkloof**

'I have a huge blackboard in the kitchen. When I pack the kids' school lunches, I cannot help but see my scribbled reminders for the day.'

– **Sharon Naidoo, Westville**



# 6 BRAIN-BOOSTING FOODS

**ROSEMARY** Researchers have found that the carnosic acid in rosemary may play a role in the prevention of Alzheimer's disease and other brain disorders. One study even found that just the scent of rosemary improved the memories of office workers.

**APPLES** Apples contain high levels of an antioxidant called quercetin that protects the brain against Alzheimer's disease. This antioxidant occurs mainly on the skin of the fruit, with a small amount of it found in the flesh. So have an apple a day to keep forgetfulness at bay!

**GRAPES** Red, purple and black grapes are all good for the brain. And another excuse to indulge in your favourite glass of red wine is that it contains good levels of a substance that is good for your mental health, called photochemical. Just don't overindulge, as it may negate the memory boosting-benefits. So it's best to limit the wine and stick to the fruit.

**DARK CHOCOLATE** In a recent international study, it was found that dark chocolate increases blood flow to the brain and may prevent the onset of dementia and stroke. However, to get the most out of chocolate in boosting your memory, buy chocolate that is low in sugar but that has a high cocoa content. Now you won't feel guilty indulging in a square or two occasionally!

**SPINACH** Including Popeye's favourite food in your diet at least three times a week will supply your brain with vital nutrients and enzymes. And the chances of you ever suffering from dementia become slimmer, since spinach has been proven to prevent this forgetful disorder in women. This green leafy vegetable also boosts your levels of folic acid (low levels have been linked to forgetting things more often than usual).

### BLUEBERRIES AND CHERRIES

Here's an excuse to have a blueberry muffin now and again and eat more cherries. Numerous studies show that both these berries boost memory. They also contain many antioxidants that may contribute to healthy brain function. 