

Keep a list of your medications and information about their side effects. If you don't have this information on hand, then take all your medications in their original containers with you on your next clinic visit. Ask your doctor to evaluate possible effects of the medication on your memory.

Stay mentally active

Your memory can benefit from mental activity as well as physical activity. At the Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center in Chicago, researchers found that participation in intellectually stimulating activities reduced the risk of dementia. Those activities included:

- Reading newspapers, books and magazines.
- Going to museums.
- Playing games, such as cards, checkers and crossword puzzles.
- Listening to the radio and watching television.

Of course, there are many more ways to stay intellectually vital: Do volunteer work. Pick up a new hobby. Go to movies, plays and other cultural events. Learn a foreign language or take music lessons.

Use memory techniques

The following techniques have some support in scientific literature. Why not see for yourself how they may work for you?

Associate. Say that you're at a high school reunion and forget a classmate's name. Try evoking associations. See if you can recall a class that you had together. Perhaps you can remember the teacher's name or visualize the room where the class met.

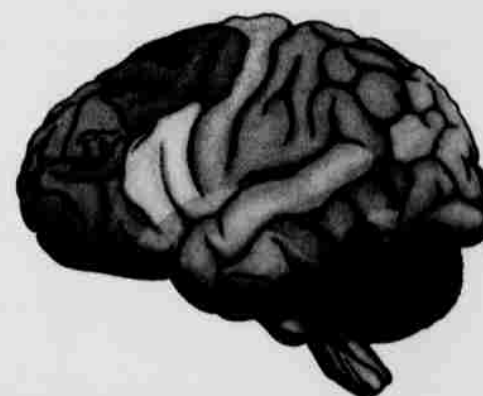
Come up with related details and wait for the name to come to mind.

You can also create associations by asking questions when you encounter new information: How can I use this concept or fact? Does this idea relate to something I already know and care about?

Break it up. Try grouping unrelated items, such as foods on a grocery list, in familiar ways. Arrange the items in alphabetical order. Or visualize the items you'll encounter in the first aisle of the store, the second, and so on.

Make choices. You might find yourself in a situation where you're deluged with new information – meeting staff members during your first day on a new job, for-example. Instead of trying to remember everyone's name, focus on a few key people. Pick up other names later.

Pay attention. People who drive, talk on a cell phone, eat and listen to music at the same time are fracturing their attention. That barrage of activity interferes with remembering what you heard, said or tasted. Although aging may reduce your capacity for multitasking, or tackling several activities at once, you may want to consider it a blessing. Doing one thing at a time can help you recall more details about each activity – and enjoy each one even more.



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Allergies: Nothing to Sneeze At

People may be allergic to many things — including dust mites, mold, pets, foods, plants, insect bites and even latex. What exactly is an allergy? According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA), it's an overreaction of the immune system to substances that are harmless to most people. The AAFA says that:

- 60 million people suffer from asthma or allergies.
- Allergies are the sixth leading cause of chronic disease.
- The cost of allergies adds up to \$18 billion annually.

Reactions can range from coughing and skin rashes to "anaphylactic shock," which can be life-threatening. But by far, the most common reactions are sneezing, a runny or stuffed-up nose, itching and watery eyes, and headache. These are the symptoms of "rhinitis."

All rhinitis is not alike

Rhinitis can be a sometime thing, clearing up after a few days. But for people with allergies, it can be a chronic problem. It may occur during certain seasons of the year or may last year-round.

Seasonal rhinitis, due to allergies, is commonly known as hay fever. The culprits? This type of rhinitis, which occurs mostly in the spring and fall, is due to pollens from trees, grasses and other plants.

Rhinitis that lasts year-round — perennial rhinitis — is due primarily to things that are constantly in a person's environment, such as pet dander and dust mites.

Between 20 million and 40 million people in the United States suffer from allergic rhinitis.

Can you avoid it?

You can take steps to avoid the substances that cause you problems. For example:

1. Keep windows closed and use the air conditioner — in your car as well as at home.

2. Try to stay indoors during time when pollen is the worst — usually the morning hours.
3. Shower, shampoo and change your clothes (which can collect pollen) after you've been outside.
4. Dry your clothes in a dryer — not outside.
5. Avoid tobacco smoke.
6. Avoid mowing the lawn if possible; if not, wear a filter mask.

Can you treat it?

If you can't avoid coming into contact with substances that trigger your allergies, you have several options.

Some people use over-the-counter decongestants, but sometimes they can actually make the problem worse if they're overused. Nasal tissue can swell, aggravating the problem.

More commonly used are antihistamines, which suppress the production of histamine — a chemical that is produced naturally and causes allergy symptoms. Newer antihistamines that don't cause drowsiness are particularly popular. For instance, Claritin® is now available without a prescription. Lower-cost generic versions of the same medication are also available over the counter.

Finally, prescription corticosteroid nose sprays that reduce inflammation are recommended for many people. These medications have very few side effects.

If you have either seasonal or perennial rhinitis, you might consider ordering your prescription medication through Express Scripts Home Delivery. You can get a three-month's supply at one time, and you'll pay less than you would for the same amount purchased from a retail pharmacy. Go online to www.express-scripts.com to do a price comparison and to find out more about prescription drugs and health conditions.