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## Healthy Brain, Healthy Memory!

A recent small study out of Harvard Medical School, may have found a link between the use of meditation for those with mild cognitive impairment and a slower progression in the development of Alzheimer's Disease. A special form of meditation (mindfulness-based stress reduction), administered for only eight weeks, seemed to produce better connectivity between brain regions and less brain atrophy. Researchers are encouraged and excited to explore these results further as about 800,000 Canadians live with Alzheimer's and that number is expected to increase to 1.4 million by 2030.

So, managing stress looks to be a good technique for slowing memory decline, but are there other activities you can do? You betcha! As usual, quit smoking - a 2-pack a day habit doubles your risk. Get sufficient - and restful - sleep. And, understand that sleeping pills don't usually achieve that! If you drink alcohol, keep it moderate. Finally, do what you can to avoid brain injuries; use seatbelts in vehicles and wear helmets when engaging in sports.

### Use Routines!

Over the age of 50, it is normal to experience small slips in memory. To help maintain your functionality, use routines to enable you to easily find things - always keep your keys, glasses, etc. in the same place. Slow down, give yourself a little extra time and pay attention to give memory a chance to consolidate. Finally, avoid multi-tasking and noisy environments as these can interfere with the memory formation process.

### Exercise Your Brain

Two factors which have been demonstrated to stave off Alzheimer's and dementia, in addition to healthy lifestyle choices such as exercise and a good diet, are keeping your brain "busy" and "engaged," as well as developing and maintaining healthy social connections. Think of it as exercise for the brain. Educating yourself, learning a new language or hobby/craft work well and social engagement (volunteering, tutoring) help keep the brain in shape.

There are many tips and tricks to aging successfully and your pharmacist is there to help you every step of the way. Be sure to include them in your social network.