



January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015

## Keep Your Brain Healthy

Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is a devastating way to age - about half a million Canadians have AD and almost 40% of Canadians know someone who has AD. Treatments are limited and those we do have work best when the disease is caught early. Two studies presented at the 2014 Alzheimer's Association International Conference have linked loss of the sense of smell to brain abnormalities that tend to precede the development of AD. If further study bears this out, we may have a way of intervening early, as well as more clues to treatment possibilities.

### Eating Fish Builds the Brain!

Fish is just turning out to be one of those superfoods! Now research is demonstrating the regular fish consumption (baked or broiled, but not fried) is associated with increased gray matter volume in the parts of the brain used for memory and thinking. The improvement was not correlated to omega-3 levels in the blood, so researchers are thinking other aspects of fish consumption are involved. Food for thought?

### Brain Games = Brain Gains

Ballroom dancing and crossword puzzles have been marked as activities that support the brain. A team at the University of Wisconsin has found that a variety of "brain games" are beneficial to the brain, leading to increased brain volume and improved scores on tests of memory and executive function (the part of the brain associated with attention, planning & organizing). The games used: card games, checkers and puzzles.

### Light Therapy

The same light therapy used to treat seasonal affective disorder and irregular circadian rhythms is proving beneficial in managing Alzheimer's patients as well. Just four weeks of standard treatment improved sleep quality and total sleep time while reducing agitation and depression, particularly in patients who are institutionalized. It is hoped that more research will show other benefits to this practice - either directly or as a result of improved sleep and mood.

January is Alzheimer's Awareness Month. Alzheimer's is a frightening disease with no cure or, at this time, reliable treatment options. All the more reason to be proactive to give yourself the best odds of staving-off the illness.