

# Remembered Remedies

## Nutrients for brain health function

Ever walked into a room and wondered what you're doing there? Said hello to a neighbour, but can't remember her name? Do you call your children and grandchildren every family name until you finally get to the right one? Well then, you are suffering with cognitive decline, but don't worry you are in good company, as most people over 40 are doing exactly the same embarrassing things as you.

More seriously, Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most common neurodegenerative disease that causes dementia in the elderly. As the ageing population increases, the prevalence of AD has increased globally and AD has become one of the leading causes of disability and death among the elderly. A number of pharmaceuticals have been approved for the treatment of AD; however, it is acknowledged that they produce only modest benefits and have a wide range of side effects. Therefore, numerous studies are underway to identify effective drugs that are free of negative side effects. There is a wealth of evidence that strongly implicates oxidative stress in the initiation and progression of AD, the potential of using nature antioxidants for prevention and treatment of AD is now the subject of much examination.

It is rapidly becoming clear that, as well as making sensible lifestyle choices, there are certain nutrients in supplement form which can help you maintain your mental faculties for longer. Key brain care nutrients and plant extracts include: Phosphatidyl Serine, Acetyl-L-Carnitine, Alpha Lipoic Acid, L-Theanine, B-complex vitamins, Ginkgo biloba and Co-enzyme Q10.

A new and perhaps surprisingly addition to this list is coconut oil.

**PHOSPHATIDYL-SERINE (PS)** exerts significant benefit for cognitive functioning, especially those functions which tend to decline with age, including memory, learning, vocabulary skills, and concentration. Limits the negative effects of stress on the brain and improves cellular communication and neurotransmitter release.

**ACETYL-L-CARNITINE (ALC)** may be of benefit in treating Alzheimer's disease, depression in the elderly, ischemia and reperfusion of the brain, and cognitive impairment due to alcoholism.

**ALPHA LIPOIC ACID (ALA)** is a sulphur-containing antioxidant, playing key roles in the production of cellular energy and acts uniquely as a potent antioxidant in protecting against both fat and water soluble free radicals. Recent research reveals that mitochondrial nutrients, such as ALA in combination with other mitochondrial nutrients, including CoQ10, may be an effective strategy for improving cognitive dysfunction.

**L-THEANINE** is a unique amino acid present almost exclusively in the tea plant (*Camellia sinensis*). In the brain, L-theanine increases dopamine and serotonin production. L-theanine increases alpha-brain wave activity, a sign of induced relaxation. Theanine administration causes a relaxed, yet alert, state of mind without sedation, beginning approximately 40 minutes after oral dosing. Early research suggests that L-theanine may help improve memory.

**CO-ENZYME Q10** is a naturally occurring substance and an essential component of the mitochondria – the energy producing unit within our cells. CoQ10 is involved in the production of ATP, the energy molecule. Recent research suggests that it is beneficial in neurological disorders as it has been discovered that Parkinson's disease patients have decreased levels of CoQ10.

**VITAMINS B12, B6 & FOLIC ACID** have been shown to reduce the brain shrinkage linked to memory loss in later life. Mild cognitive impairment caused by brain shrinkage affects one-in-six of the over-70's in Britain - that's 1,500,000 people. Oxford University researchers found that a compound called homocysteine (which has already been linked to elevated risk of heart disease) is also implicated in cognitive decline. The researchers say this latest discovery may offer a 'glimmer of hope' to the 500 people diagnosed with Alzheimer's each day in the UK.

### GINKGO BILOBA

This popular supplement, from the leaves of the ginkgo biloba tree, is thought to help boost circulation and memory and by increasing blood supply by dilating blood vessels, reducing blood viscosity, modification of neurotransmitter systems, and reducing the density of oxygen free radicals. A standardized extract is widely prescribed in Germany and France for the treatment of a range of conditions including memory and concentration problems, confusion, depression, anxiety, dizziness, tinnitus and headache.

## **COCONUT OIL**

There is a lot of talk on the internet suggesting that coconut oil prevents or even treats Alzheimer's disease. The claims have to do with ketones. Ketones are produced in the body as it converts fat into energy. The primary source of energy for the brain is glucose. In Alzheimer's disease, it's believed that brain cells have difficulty processing glucose. Some researchers describe Alzheimer's as a form of 'diabetes of the brain' where the brain effectively runs out of fuel. The theory is that ketones may provide an alternative fuel source to keep the brain nourished.

In the USA, a GP, Dr Mary Newport, was trying to find something to help her husband Steve who had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Dr Newport recognised that ketones are metabolised in the liver after you eat medium chain triglycerides found in coconut oil and she added coconut oil to her husband's diet and monitored his symptoms.

She was shocked and surprised to witness a marked improvement in his motor skills, his emotional and cognitive response. She said: "He was not able to run. He was able to run again. He could not read for about a year and a half, but after two or three months he was able to read. Instead of being very sluggish, not talking very much in the morning, he would come out in the morning with energy, talkative and joking."

Dr Newport documented Steve's progress in a book titled, *Alzheimer's Disease: What if there was a cure?*

Some people are concerned about fats in the diet, and are scared to eat coconut oil because it is a saturated fat. Saturated fats from animals are considered bad for the heart, but the saturated fat in coconut oil is medium chain triglycerides (MCT's). MCT's have a beneficial role in the body promoting heart health, increased metabolism with anti-fungal and other health-promoting properties. Coconut oil can be heated to high temperatures without creating dangerous trans-fats.

Just make sure you choose a raw, virgin, organic coconut oil. In other words; a pure, non-hydrogenated source.

Always work with your GP or consultant when embarking on a new dietary regimen when taking prescribed medication or after diagnosis of a serious health condition.

## **LIFESTYLE FOR PREVENTING AND SLOWING COGNITIVE DECLINE**

Eat organic, local and fresh foods as much as possible

Optimise omega 3 to 6 ratio using cold pressed seed oils

Drink plenty of water

Consume a low sodium / high potassium diet

Include chlorophyll rich superfoods e.g. spirulina, alfalfa, kelp, wheatgrass daily

Avoid toxin exposure – limit heavy metal residues e.g. mercury

Exercise daily to regulate stress and support vascular health

Practice stretching and breathing exercises regularly

Supplement with neuro-protective nutrients

Add Coconut oil to your daily diet

Keep your mind active with new mental challenges, hobbies and so on.

Limit EMF exposure and mobile phone usage

Laugh everyday and don't take life, or indeed yourself, too seriously!