

## drawing a blank

We all know that frustrating feeling...searching for car keys, running into an acquaintance and blanking on her name, forgetting where you left an important paper.

Memory problems may feel like a sign of aging, but whatever your age, you can train yourself not to forget the things that are truly important to you.

Lynn Stern, social worker, The Geriatrics Center, University of Michigan Health System, teaches workshops with strategies to help people improve their memories and is co-author of a book, *Improving Your Memory: How to Remember What You're Starting to Forget*.

Stern says that it isn't realistic to expect that you will always remember information and will stop misplacing things, but an "awareness of the fragility of the working memory" and recognizing what you need to remember and are likely to forget will help. Working memory is equated with conscious thought and refers

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As we age, we may take longer to learn new information, which means we have to pay closer attention to information we want to remember.

## MEMORY

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to the small amount of material that can be held in the mind at any given time.

Think about what information is a priority for you to remember, and use these tips to help you.

Don't let yourself get distracted. Focus your attention on what you want to remember. Sometimes "forgetting" is really lack of attention. Before you blame your memory, ask yourself if you were really paying attention.

### Take Care of Yourself

Stern says research is showing that "what is good for your heart is good for your head," for example exercise and eating heart-healthy food. Illness, depression and fatigue can all impact memory. You are also more likely to forget things when you are under stress—including experiencing a loss,

moving or even running late to an appointment.

### Learn Something New

Stern says, "New learning helps people of all ages to keep their memories and minds in the best shape possible." It is helpful to tackle a new challenge like learning a new card game.

### Still Worried?

If you are concerned that your memory problems are not normal, seek medical evaluation. One sign you might need medical advice is if you can't do something you once were able to do easily or well, like knitting.

It is impossible to have a perfect memory, and Stern reminds people that, "Everyone forgets sometimes. We figure out what is important for us, and then we do the best we can."



Turner Geriatric Clinic and Turner Senior Resource Center offer a variety of programs, classes and support groups for the community. Information about classes like Improving Your Memory and Improving Your Memory for Baby Boomers can be found online at [www.med.umich.edu/geriatrics](http://www.med.umich.edu/geriatrics) or by calling 734-764-2556.

## Tips for Remembering

- ▶▶ **Give yourself plenty of time.** People of all ages forget more frequently when they are rushing.
- ▶▶ **Make it a habit.** If you always misplace your keys, put a hook near your front door and hang your keys there every time you enter the house. That way you won't have to hunt for the keys when you are leaving.
- ▶▶ **Make choices.** No one can remember everything. So put effort and energy into those areas that are most important to you. To find out about memory improvement classes for older adults and baby boomers, call 734-764-2556.

## MENOPAUSE



## reading list

*Where Did I Leave My Glasses?*  
by Martha Weinman Lear

*The Body Image Workbook: An 8-Step Program for Learning to Like Your Looks* by Thomas Cash

*Sex Matters for Women: Taking Care of Your Sexual Self* by Sallie Foley, Sally Kope, Dennis Sugrue

*Making Love Again: Hope for Couples Facing the Loss of Sexual Intimacy* by Keith Laken and Virginia Laken

*Our Bodies, Ourselves: Menopause* by The Boston Women's Health Book Collective

For a longer list of resources about menopause and sexual health, visit the newsletter's Web site, [www.med.umich.edu/whp/newsletters/index.htm](http://www.med.umich.edu/whp/newsletters/index.htm).

# Learning wisely

## Stay informed to prevent physical or hormonal changes from putting a damper on your sex life.

As we age, changes in our lives, our relationships and our bodies can be expected. However, the changes that occur during menopause don't have to have a negative effect on our sexual health.

Joyce Glisson, Clinical Social Worker and Sexual Health Therapist, University of Michigan Health System (UMHS), says the women she helps at the UMHS center for sexual health have a few concerns in common.

### Menopause May Contribute To:

- ▶ Lowered sex drive and loss of libido— If everything else (mental health, physical health) is normal, chances are that menopause could be responsible for lowering your sex drive.
- ▶ Painful intercourse—The loss of hormones can lead to vaginal atrophy. If over-the-counter lubrication doesn't help, talk to your health care provider about possible hormone therapy.
- ▶ Fatigue—Low estrogen may cause hot flashes and other interruptions in your usual sleep patterns.
- ▶ Decrease in self-esteem—Sometimes women experience weight gain and other body changes during menopause that result in lowered body image or self esteem.

Whether you identify with one or more of the issues on the above list, it is important to know that you can get help. "You should be able to have healthy sexuality and intimacy as long as you want it," says Glisson. "If you are having concerns or difficulties, there is help."

## Change Your Approach

Glisson and her colleagues provide support, education and information for better sexual health. Some of the changes of menopause can be overcome by the following actions:

- ▶ Women who have a lack of sexual desire may find that engaging in a sexual experience often leads to development of sexual desire.
- ▶ Look at sexuality differently. Take more time. Expand your repertoire.
- ▶ Some women find that adjusting their lifestyle to exercise more or modifying their diet can combat the changes of menopause (weight gain, fatigue, etc.).
- ▶ Don't underestimate the importance of communication. Either partner may feel embarrassed or frustrated about life changes. Communication can help work through those concerns.



Contact the center for sexual health at 734-763-4963 to make an appointment, to find out if your insurance covers an appointment or to learn about the sliding scale for the uninsured. Learn more about the center by visiting [www2.med.umich.edu/departments/sexualhealth](http://www2.med.umich.edu/departments/sexualhealth).

## Improving Your Sexual Health As You Age

- ▶ Don't ignore the importance of intimacy, love and sexual pleasure for well-being.
- ▶ Make quality time with your partner a priority.
- ▶ Learn more about the emotional and physical aspects of sexual response.
- ▶ Discuss changes and share suggestions with your partner.
- ▶ Become more comfortable with each other and enjoy the freedom to express your desires.

**To Receive Future Issues:** call the Women's Health Resource Center at 734-936-8886. If you no longer wish to receive Women's Health, please e-mail [UMHS-WHRC@med.umich.edu](mailto:UMHS-WHRC@med.umich.edu) and ask to have your name removed from the mailing list.

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## RESEARCH

# the Mediterranean diet

European studies have suggested that the Mediterranean diet (high in monounsaturated fats and rich in fruits and vegetables) can increase longevity. Mediterranean diets have also been associated with health benefits such as lower risks for cardiovascular disease and cancer.

A recent study led by the University of Michigan Health System marked the first time a method has been devised to achieve the major Mediterranean nutrient intakes using American foods and having American women follow this diet. In the study, women more than doubled their fruit and vegetable intake and

dramatically increased their consumption of "good" fats when they were counseled by registered dietitians and provided with a list of guidelines on the amount of certain foods they should eat each day.

The study's lead author, Zora Djuric, Ph.D., research professor of Family Medicine at the U-M Medical School and a member of the U-M Comprehensive Cancer Center, is now leading a new study called Healthy Eating for Colon Cancer Prevention, in which she and colleagues are examining whether a Mediterranean diet can have preventive effects in the colon in persons at increased colon cancer risk.



### In the UMHS study, specific suggestions on the exchange list included:

- ▶ Eight to 10 servings each day of high monounsaturated fatty acid (MUFA), such as olive or hazelnut oil
- ▶ Limits on fats that are low in MUFA, such as corn oil, margarine, tahini, pine nuts and sesame seeds
- ▶ One or more servings a day of dark green vegetables
- ▶ At least one exchange per day of garlic, onions or leeks
- ▶ One tablespoon or more per day of green herbs
- ▶ One or more servings a day of red vegetables
- ▶ One or more servings a day of yellow or orange vegetables
- ▶ One or more servings a day of other vegetables
- ▶ One or more servings a day of vitamin C fruits, such as oranges, mangoes and strawberries
- ▶ One or more servings a day of other fruits, such as apples, bananas and grapes



More information on the study and how to participate in it, can be found at the University of Michigan Engage Web site: [www.umms.med.umich.edu/engage/dispub\\_condition.do](http://www.umms.med.umich.edu/engage/dispub_condition.do). Click on the cancer-prevention listing.

## EVENTS, CLASSES, & OPPORTUNITIES

# women's health seminars

The University of Michigan Health System's Women's Health Program offers free seminars throughout the year. The July seminar will be led by

a physician from the University of Michigan Center for Reproductive Medicine.

### Recurring Pregnancy Loss

**Date:** July 21, 2009

**Location:** Center for Reproductive Medicine, Briarwood Building 1, 475 Market Street, Ann Arbor

**Time:** All of the seminars are from 6:30–8 p.m.

**Registration:** For more information or to register to attend, call 734-936-8886.