

Low levels of omega-3 fatty acids may cause memory problems

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A diet lacking in omega-3 fatty acids, nutrients commonly found in fish, may cause your brain to age faster and lose some of its memory and thinking abilities, according to a study published in the February 28, 2012, print issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology. Omega-3 fatty acids include the nutrients called docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA).

"People with lower blood levels of omega-3 fatty acids had lower brain volumes that were equivalent to about two years of structural brain aging," said study author Zaldy S. Tan, MD, MPH, of the Easton Center for Alzheimer's Disease Research and the Division of Geriatrics, University of California at Los Angeles.

For the study, 1,575 people with an average age of 67 and free of dementia underwent MRI brain scans. They were also given tests that measured mental function, body mass and the omega-3 fatty acid levels in their [red blood cells](#).

The researchers found that people whose [DHA](#) levels were among the bottom 25 percent of the participants had lower [brain volume](#) compared to people who had higher DHA levels. Similarly, participants with levels of all omega-3 fatty acids in the bottom 25 percent also scored lower on tests of [visual memory](#) and executive function, such as problem solving and multi-tasking and abstract thinking.

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

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