

IMPACT

**Identify Mechanisms to Preserve Agility in
Cognition and Thinking**

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at **Northwestern
Memorial Hospital**

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Brain Health Tip:

Vitamins and Supplements



There are many “brain health supplements” on the market. It can be hard to know which nutritional supplements, if any, are effective. [The Food Drug Administration \(FDA\) does not test supplements or supplements’ advertised benefits before they are sold.](#) The supplement manufacturers may

claim that the product is good for your brain health, but this may not be true.

[Before taking a new supplement, you should talk to your doctor.](#) Supplements can make your prescription medications less effective or interfere with blood tests.

A 2026 study reviewed all existing data on nutritional supplements. Researchers reported that for adults age 65 and older, a combination of melatonin, omega-3 fatty acids, tryptophan and vitamin E seemed to improve overall cognition and memory. Melatonin alone also improved overall cognition and memory. Vitamin D3 seemed to

improve the brain's ability to judge distance, navigate space, and recognize how objects relate to one another.

However, researchers noted that we need larger, long-term studies to know if these supplements truly make a lasting difference for brain health.

To learn more about the supplements study, scan the QR code below:



This newsletter is not medical advice. Ask your doctor before trying a new supplement.

Have You Ever Wondered ...

What Do We Test with the Tablet?

During a study visit, you complete four thinking and memory tests on a tablet. Each test corresponds to a cognitive measure: working memory, processing speed, episodic memory, or executive function.

Working memory is a small amount of information that is available short-term. You use working memory to remember a one-time password.

Processing speed is how quickly your brain receives,

understands, responds to information. When a traffic light turns green, your processing speed determines how quickly you step on the gas pedal.

Episodic memory is memory of past events. You use episodic memory when you recall a story and tell it to your friends.

Executive function lets you tune out distractions and stay focused on the task at hand. You use executive



function when you tune out someone else's conversation so you can read your book.

Together, these four tests

give researchers a fuller picture of your brain health, with several types of memory and thinking skills working together.

Cognitive Measure	Tablet Test
Working Memory	Remember and sort a list of animals and foods
Processing Speed	Answer whether two pictures are the same or different
Episodic Memory	Remember the order of a list of activities
Executive Function	Answer which way the middle arrow is pointing



Your results from this study are not a medical diagnosis. If you have concerns about a decline in your memory or thinking, talk to your doctor.

Meet the Neurovascular Inflammation Lab



Co-Directors

Ayush Batra & David Sullivan
MD



PhD



MD/PhD Student

Erika Arias
PhD



**Research
Technologist**
Zoie Lipfert

We are delighted to be collaborating with the **Neurovascular Inflammation (NVI) Lab.** The NVI Lab studies how

inflammation and white blood cells influence brain health, aging and disorders like **stroke** and **dementia.**

We'd love your feedback!

If you have any feedback
on your visit(s) or this
newsletter, please email
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Learn more about our study
and how you can get involved on
[our website:](#)



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