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Phosphatidylserine

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PS - Don't Forget to Take Your Phosphatidylserine

Studies show this nutrient, derived from soy phospholipids, may actually help you remember better.

If you have temporarily misplaced a familiar object - such as your car keys and haven't a clue where you left it, or cannot remember telephone numbers that you used to know, you are one of the millions of people who have momentary memory lapses as they age.

By Frank Murray

Don't worry—you're not headed for senility or Alzheimer's disease. But is there a nutritional supplement that can enter the brain and jump-start the memory process?

Yes. It's called phosphatidylserine—PS for short—and is derived from soy phospholipids. A naturally occurring phospholipid nutrient, PS is essential for the functioning of the body's cells, especially brain cells, where it is mostly concentrated. PS is rapidly absorbed and crosses the blood-brain barrier, where it reaches the brain minutes after being absorbed.

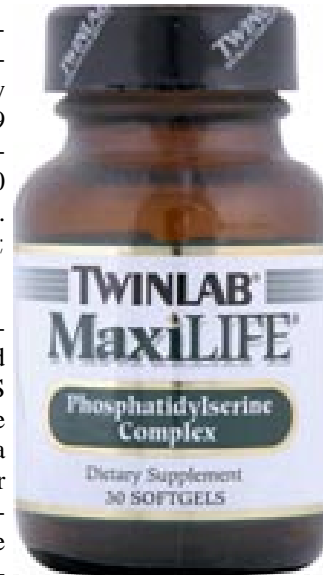
Clinical studies going back to the 1970s suggest that PS, as a dietary supplement, can help to maintain or improve cognitive functions in mature adults, especially when combined with exercise and a healthful diet. PS is not found in foods, and only negligible

In 1991, T.H. Crook, Ph.D., of the Memory Assessment Clinics in Bethesda, Md., in conjunction with researchers from the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, Nashville, Stanford University, Palo Alto, Calif., and a phar-

maceutical company in Italy, conducted a study involving 149 volunteers, ranging in age from 50 to 75. (Neurology, 1991; 41: 644-9)

Each of the participants received 300 mg/day of PS (100 mg in three equal doses), vs. a placebo group, for 12 weeks. Assessments were made periodically during the study, as well as four weeks after the therapy was terminated. The researchers reported that PS was well tolerated, and after three weeks of PS supplementation, the volunteers had improved in three primary categories: learning names and faces; recalling names and faces; and facial recognition.

Since this progress was not maintained through the full 12 weeks of the study, the research team segregated a subgroup of 57 people who were relatively memory-impaired. Their aver-



age was 64.3, and they responded better to PS. While improving in the just-named variables, they also exhibited a significant improvement in: telephone number recall; misplaced objects recall; paragraph recall (Wechsler Memory Scale-Logical Memory Subtest); and ability to concentrate while reading, conversing and performing tasks.

The researchers stated that PS had improved the subgroup's performance by an average of two points in their ability to learn names and faces, essentially "rolling back the clock" about 12 years. So, a volunteer with a cognitive age of 64 was restored, on average, to a cognitive age of 52, prompting the research team to conclude, "The magnitude of effect may be considered significant by many subjects and clinicians."

In 1992, Crook's memory assessment clinics, Vanderbilt University and a pharmaceutical company in Italy conducted a test involving 51 people, ranging in age from 55 to 85, with an average age of 71, as well as those assigned to the placebo group. (Psychopharmacol. Bull., 1992; 28: 61

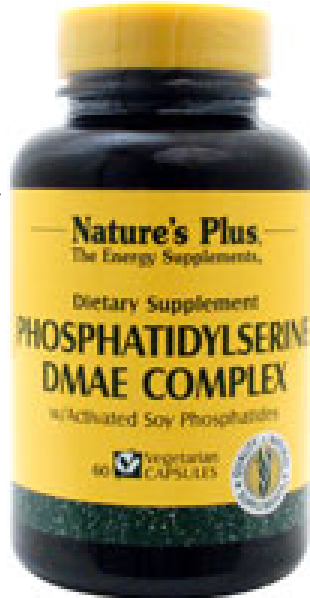
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In the double-blind, randomized trial, those assigned to the PS group were given 300 mg/day for 12 weeks. At the end of the study, the researchers reported that the PS-treated volunteers had showed improvement in the following categories:

- ◆ Memory for names of familiar persons; names of interviewers or clinic staff.
- ◆ Recall of the location of frequently misplaced objects.
- ◆ Recall of details of events from the previous day.
- ◆ Recall of details of events from within the past week.

In Italy, C. Villardita and colleagues conducted a double-blind study involving 170 volunteers. They ranged in age from 55 to 80, with an average age of 65.7. The PS group was given 300 mg daily of PS (100 mg three times a day), while the other group received a placebo. The study ran for three months, and a number of neuropsychological tests were administered at 45 days into the study and again at the end of the trial. (Clinical Thais Journal, 1987; 24: 84-93) The researchers reported that, at the end of the 90-day period, 12 of 24 test batteries had reached statistical significance in favor of PS. In addition, improvements on the tests for attention and vigilance were said to be significant.

PS considerably improved the volunteers' performance on the Rey Auditory Verbal Learning Test, which determines immediate recall, and on the Semantic Memory Test, which evaluates immediate and delayed recall. Based on these and other cognitive tests, the Italian researchers concluded that PS can benefit brain-based proc-



esses.

The largest and longest-running study involving PS was conducted in 1993, and the results are still being analyzed. This trial involved 425 volunteers, whose ages ranged from 65 to 93. They were selected from 23 institutions in northern Italy, and all of the participants had moderate to severe cognitive atrophy. (Aging Clin. Exp. Res., 1993; 5:123-33)

The volunteers were divided into groups: The treatment group received 300 mg/day of PS, while the comparison group received a placebo for six months. Memory and learning scores were significantly higher in the PS group, the researchers report.

Another double-blind study, as yet unpublished, which was conducted at the Geriatric Institute for Education and Research and the department of geriatrics, Kaplan Hospital, Rehovot, Israel, in 1995, confirmed that soy-based PS can improve both memory and cognition in healthy seniors.

The Israeli team established that, at the end of the three-month trial, the PS group had improved significantly over the placebo group in manipulating information, in visual and numerical recall and in mood. In this study, 72 healthy seniors, ranging in age from 60 to 80, received either 300 mg/day of plant PS or a placebo consisting of 500 mg/day of lecithin.

Similar results were reported in an open, placebo-controlled study involving men who had disturbances in their daily "clock" (the 24-hour circadian rhythm). Some people suffer from depression and the "winter blues" during the winter months. According to researchers, PS restored the daily rhythm of thyrotropin hormone secretion, thereby correcting the problem. (Chrono-biologia. 1990; 17: 267-74)

In still another trial, 40 women with "psycho-organic" dysfunctions were

given PS intramuscularly. Most of the patients reportedly improved with PS, and histochemical and blood analysis failed to find any significant side effects. (La alnico Therapeutica. 1987; 120: 33-6).

PS can also benefit healthy, young subjects, according to another study. In both trials, the researchers studied healthy men who were subjected to exercise-induced stress. When the volunteers were pretreated with PS, this lowered stress-hormone production, the researchers report. (Neuroendocrinol., 1990; 52: 243-8; European Journal of Clinical Pharmacology, 1992; 41: 385-8)

In 23 published clinical studies, of which 12 were double-blind, there is apparently no danger from long-term use of PS. In a few cases, taking 200 mg or more as a single dose can lead to nausea in susceptible people because of PS's stimulation of dopamine release. This effect is minimized by taking PS with meals. And a few people have reported that taking PS just before going to bed may delay their falling asleep.

If you are experiencing memory lapses and forgetfulness, you may find that PS can jump-start your memory process. Since PS crosses the blood-brain barrier, it appears to be a useful dietary supplement, especially when combined with vitamins, minerals and other nutrients as part of a well-planned supplement program.