

LEF Magazine December 1998

## On The COVER

### STAYING MENTALLY SHARP

Brain Boosting: A Family Affair  
One mom's approach to sharpen mental acuity

By Twig Mowatt

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Preventing Mental Incapacity with Hydergine



Theresa Todoroff was a top-performing engineer with a sharp mind for detail until she had her first child in 1989. Six weeks later, when Todoroff returned to her job at a major regional power company, she began noticing a dramatic change in her memory capabilities and general acuity. She was highly concerned to find herself forgetting people's names and searching for words that wouldn't come. Her mind seemed suddenly dulled and she began making silly errors on the job that wouldn't have happened before.

At first the culprit seemed to be the lack of sleep endured by all new parents. But Todoroff feared a darker reason for the lapses. A great uncle and aunt, both now deceased, suffered from Alzheimer's disease, and her grandfather from senile dementia. "I wasn't my former self," she remembers. "My position at work demanded attention to detail, as did balancing work, home and family. I thought I was developing Alzheimer's and I was worried about not being able to take care of my family."

That's when Todoroff got serious about taking care of her brain. Now 40, and mother to two sons, she insists on describing herself as an "ordinary mother staying home with the kids, doing everyday things." But her commitment to maintaining good health is anything but ordinary. To learn everything she could about cognitive enhancement and fighting Alzheimer's, she launched an all-out educational effort that included analyzing subscriptions to health newsletters, surfing the Internet, studying biological-aging textbooks and a wide range of research periodicals, and constantly revising her own personal regimen of supplements, diet and exercise in accordance with the latest science and how her

body responds.

This campaign, she reasons, is her best shot at taking care of herself, as well as her family.

"I know I won't be young forever," she says. "I could develop Alzheimer's, or any other disease, as easily as the next person. But I'm trying to do everything I can now to make tomorrow better for myself and my children."

To Todoroff and her kids, Byron, 9, and Kent, 5, this means being an effective, lucid parent for many years to come. It also means being a good role model and encouraging them, even at their tender ages, to adopt the kind of good habits that could keep them vital and healthy throughout their lives. To that end, Todoroff has started both boys on their own regimens. They each take multiple vitamins every day—approximately double the FDA-recommended amounts—and extra vitamin C twice a day. "When the kids are old enough to understand, and able to make their own decisions regarding supplementation, I'll guide them if they let me."

Though Todoroff says she began her cognitive enhancement and anti-Alzheimer's regimen "full blast" in February 1997, she has a long-standing interest in health, describing herself as being a stereotypical health food nut throughout the 1970s and '80s. The release of Durk Pearson and Sandy Shaw's *Life Extension: A Practical Approach*, in 1982, sharpened her focus.

Her current lifestyle includes plenty of exercise, though she's modified her routine a bit over the years, replacing high-impact exercise with a method easier on the joints. She takes power walks, for example, carrying three-pound weights to maintain upper-

body strength and raise her heart beat more quickly. Doing chores, such as cutting the grass, she tries to exert herself enough to raise her heart-rate for at least 20 minutes. "Power vacuuming" is another favorite.

Though Todoroff was a vegetarian for more than 10 years, she reintroduced meat into her diet at the suggestion of her husband when she was breast feeding. Still, meat isn't a focal point; she and her family have chicken or roast a turkey only on special occasions. The boys are just as happy with tofu with soy sauce, bean tacos, macaroni and cheese, and cheese pizza. In the summer, the family feasts on whatever is fresh from their own garden and winter finds them leaning toward breads, potatoes and pastas with tomato sauces. Fat-free dairy products are always good. To satisfy her kids' yearnings for sweets, Todoroff gives them low-fat cookies or dry, lightly sweetened boxed cereals, fruit roll-ups and frozen juice pops. Small meals and frequent snacks of crackers, nuts and popcorn are the norm throughout the day.

Her avid reading and research have convinced her that fighting Alzheimer's also means avoiding aluminum in foods and in cooking utensils. She won't buy antacids, underarm antiperspirants or baking powders with aluminum, and usually cooks only in glass and stainless steel. If she does use her favorite ancient cast-aluminum pressure cooker, she's careful not to include acidic foods in order to avoid aluminum contamination.

Then there is her list of daily vitamins and supplements. Trial and error has brought her to her current list of items and doses, and though she's pleased with the regimen at the moment, she's open to further revisions and changes as research suggests and as her body dictates. (Her background in chemistry helps in making these decisions.) For instance, she started out with 25 milligrams of DHEA, but later upped the dose to 50 mg, a move that she says made her feel dazed. "I actually backed my car through the garage door," she admits. "I wasn't feeling normal."

She cut out the DHEA altogether for a couple of weeks, then introduced it again at 10 mg, working gradually back to 25 mg, which she takes first thing in the morning.

She also starts the day with 60 mg of Ginkgo biloba, 125 mg of DMAE and 10 mg of pregnenolone for cognitive enhancement. Also on the list: 200 mg of chromium picolinate (to ward off another family disease, diabetes), calcium, magnesium and zinc. With her mid-morning meal or with lunch, Todoroff takes Life Extension Mix, 200 micrograms of selenium, 1,000 mg of vitamin C, 400 mg of vitamin E, fish oil, 400 mg of folic acid, 250 mg niacin, and a second round of calcium, magnesium and zinc. At this time she also uses 300 mg of aminoguanidine for anti-aging in general. Ten mg of vinpocetine, another cognitive enhancer, rounds out her lunchtime regimen.

Later, with her afternoon or evening meal, Todoroff again reaches for Life Extension Mix, and another 10 mg of pregnenolone, calcium, magnesium and zinc. Two or three nights out of the week, and about one hour before going to bed, she will take 500 mg of niacin for growth-hormone enhancement, a final round of calcium, magnesium and zinc (for a total daily intake of 1,000 mg calcium, 400 mg magnesium and 15 mg zinc), and 3 mg of melatonin not for its sleep-enhancing properties but because it is a good antioxidant.

Though the program is intended to fight Alzheimer's, Todoroff wouldn't mind improving her mental acuity in the process. "The smarter one is, the easier life is," she says. As for her boys, she adds, "Children have to be smart, because these days making foolish choices can kill. I hope for wisdom before I am old."

Nowadays Todoroff feels much better than she did following the birth of her first son, but she still worries that she hasn't returned to her 25-year-old peak cognitive state. "I could remember where words were located on a page. My recall was phenomenal," she says. Rating her overall state of health on a scale of one to 10, she says she's a seven. "My goal is 10, of course. Then, when I reach 10, the scale will change."

"But today, I don't have the murkiness of mind that once scared me," she says. "My thinking is clearer now, but there have been 20-some years of decline, so the climb back up will take time. But I don't think there is a ceiling on the clarity one can attain. The sky's the limit."

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