

Speaking foreign languages may help protect your memory

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People who speak more than two languages may lower their risk of developing memory problems, according a study released today that will be presented at the American Academy of Neurology's 63rd Annual Meeting in Honolulu April 9 to April 16, 2011.

"It appears speaking more than two languages has a protective effect on memory in seniors who practice foreign languages over their lifetime or at the time of the study," said study author Magali Perquin, PhD, with the Center for Health Studies from the Public Research Center for Health ("CRP-Santé") in Luxembourg. Perquin is helping to lead the MemoVie study which involves a consortium of partners from different hospitals and institutions.

The study involved 230 men and women with an average age of 73 who had spoken or currently spoke two to seven languages. Of the participants, 44 reported [cognitive problems](#); the rest of the group had no [memory](#) issues.

Researchers discovered that those people who spoke four or more languages were five times less likely to develop cognitive problems compared to those people who only spoke two languages.

People who spoke three languages were three times less likely to have cognitive problems compared to bilinguals. In addition, people who currently spoke more than two languages were also four times less likely to have cognitive impairment. The results accounted for the age and the

education of the participants.

"Further studies are needed to try to confirm these findings and determine whether the protection is limited to thinking skills related to [language](#) or if it also extends beyond that and benefits other areas of cognition," said Perquin.

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

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