

Education may not affect how fast you will lose your memory

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While a higher level of education may help lower the risk of Alzheimer's disease, new research shows that once educated people start to become forgetful, a higher level of education does not appear to protect against how fast they will lose their memory. The research is published in the February 3, 2009, print issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

In the study, scientists tested the thinking skills of 6,500 people with an average age of 72 from the Chicago area with different levels of education. The education level of people in the study ranged from eight years of school or fewer to 16 or more years of schooling. Interviews and tests about memory and thinking functions were given every three years for an average of 6.5 years.

At the beginning of the study, those with more education had better memory and thinking skills than those with less education. However, education was not related to how rapidly these skills declined during the course of the study.

The study found that results remained the same regardless of other factors related to education such as occupation and race and the effects of practice with the tests.

"This is an interesting and important finding because scientists have long debated whether aging and memory loss tend to have a lesser affect on highly educated people. While education is associated with the memory's ability to function at a higher level, we found no link between higher education and how fast the memory loses that ability," says study author Robert S. Wilson, PhD, with the Alzheimer's Disease Center at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago.

Source: American Academy of Neurology

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