

# Older Brains Affected by High Blood Sugar

An increase in blood sugar in aging patients can affect the hippocampus, thereby affecting memory and learning, according to findings published in the December 2008 issue of *Annals of Neurology*.

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**Dr. Scott Small**



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Authors said the research may explain why active people experience fewer cognitive difficulties as they get older, because exercise regulates blood glucose levels.

“We had previously shown that physical exercise strengthens a part of the brain involved with aging but, at the time, we didn’t know why physical exercise would have this selective benefit,” said Dr. Scott Small, senior author of the study

and Associate Professor of Neurology, Taub Institute for Research on Alzheimer’s Disease and the Aging Brain, Columbia University Medical Center.

“We think it’s because subjects who exercised had better glucose handling,” Dr. Small said.

The study examined hippocampus function using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) in 240 healthy older people.

“The paper identifies an etiology for normal age-related memory decline,” Dr. Small said. “Elevations in blood glucose levels differentially target the dentate gyrus part of the hippocampus implicated in aging and, as we age, we develop a slight but gradually worsening difficulty in handling blood sugar levels.”

*From: Rising Blood Sugar May Harm the Aging Brain. Washington-Post.com. December 30, 2008.*

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