One Stop Access to Improved Hearing Services

An estimated one-third of Americans between the ages of 65 and 75, and close to one-half of those older than 75, have some measure of hearing loss. But hearing challenges also affect the very young and everyone in between. In fact, the number of Americans with a hearing loss has doubled during the past 30 years according to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

In response to these numbers and the growing needs of our patients, Cedars-Sinai Medical Group has expanded its otolaryngology services, added new, sophisticated equipment and consolidated hearing testing, diagnosis and treatment into one convenient location.

Bon Voyage to Travel Health Worries

If you’re planning a business trip or vacation that includes stops in any developing countries, preventive medicine should be first on your checklist. Being prepared with the appropriate immunizations and armed with medications and knowledge that may stave off sometimes severe travel reactions and disease can save your trip… and your health.

“I was a little apprehensive about the health risks of our vacation to Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand,” recalls Marilyn Rosensweig of her recent 5th wedding anniversary adventure. “It was our dream trip, so I wanted to make sure nothing spoiled it. We got our shots and a lot of personalized information at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Group Travel Medicine Clinic, so we felt ready to visit the jungles without fear.”

When is Travel Medicine Necessary?

Rachel Mashburn, PharmD, one of the clinical pharmacists who cares for patients at the Travel Medicine Clinic, recommends you consult a medical professional prior to traveling anywhere in Central or South America, Africa, the Middle East or Asia. You may be exposed to diseases such as typhoid fever, malaria, yellow fever or hepatitis, or experience reactions to bacteria in water and food. Most of Europe is relatively safe, she says, but if there is any question, err on the side of caution.

What Services are Provided?

“The Medical Group’s travel medicine services are designed to provide our patients with a comprehensive package that includes health risk and disease prevention information specific to their itineraries, plus safe practices, vaccination requirements and recommendations, food and water precautions and travel warnings from the U.S. Department of State,” Mashburn explains. “We get the latest available information from highly reliable sources such as the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization.”

The travel preparation process begins with a
Why Expansion in a Time of Belt-Tightening?

Cedars-Sinai Medical Group is focused on one priority above all others: providing quality medical care and service to our patients. That drives us to find the most effective and efficient ways to be responsive to the needs of our patients, even in the face of an economy that is still struggling and a healthcare system that faces major changes and challenges.

There are many examples of our growth and evolution in this newsletter that pertain directly to that goal, including the addition of highly credentialed physicians, the recognition of outstanding work by our employees, and new services added. There are other examples that are not quite so obvious, but are groundbreaking and will truly improve our service to and relationship with our patients.

Further expansion and upgrade of our Electronic Medical Records (EMR) system, although a behind-the-scenes technology, has a major impact on the care and safety of our patients. It allows us to further refine continuity of care, and establishes the platform for one medical record for a Medical Group patient that will ultimately be instantly accessible to any physician or caregiver in the Cedars-Sinai Health System who is treating that patient. We were among the first to embrace EMR several years ago, and we are on the leading edge once again, taking advantage of the advances in the technology and the resulting benefits to our patients.

In addition, you’ll read about the concept of a medical home. On the surface, that means we are working to ensure our patients feel good about their relationship with their personal physicians and that they know they’ll receive responsive service from people who care. On a deeper level, it is a way to expand the reach of our primary care physicians, like an extended family. A team of experts, working collaboratively under the direction of the primary care physician, will offer our patients greater access to the support they need for information and health management.

Cedars-Sinai Medical Group is a “medical home” for our patients in all ways. We are committed to continuous monitoring of our processes, protocols and service to further improve our delivery, and we encourage patient input to help us assess our success.

Share your thoughts with us

Please call our Patient Services Department at (800) 700-6424, Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., with any issues you may wish to discuss.

To Screen or Not to Screen

If you are questioning the need for or value of a particular health screening before you undergo the procedure, you’re not alone. And you are right to do so, according to Howard Wynne, MD, medical director for Cedars-Sinai Medical Group.

Unnecessary testing and treatment is a topic of discussion that has surfaced increasingly in association with health care reform and good medical practice. In fact, President Barack Obama’s recent annual physical examination was the focus of media attention across the nation, with questions as to whether his age and risk factors warranted certain tests, including a virtual colonoscopy and a heart scan, which exposed him to unnecessary levels of radiation.

Use Evidence-Based Medicine for Informed Decisions

“The bottom line is that you and your personal physician should thoroughly discuss any testing you are considering, including an evaluation of your individual disease risk factors, general pros and cons of the test and possible harm or side effects you might experience,” Dr. Wynne states.

“Don’t assume you need a particular test or a surgical procedure, regardless of what you’ve read on the Internet or seen on TV. That’s where the science comes in.”

At Cedars-Sinai Medical Group, physicians use evidence-based medicine in their decision-making. Simply put, diagnosis and care is based on strong data from medical studies that show the procedure is useful and appropriate for the patient.

Weigh the Risks

“More care is not necessarily better care,” Dr. Wynne explains. For example, a recent New England Journal of Medicine study suggests there are too many angiograms performed, an invasive imaging test for heart disease that carries a slight risk for stroke or heart attack. It can be a life-saving procedure, but a stress test might be just as effective for many lower-risk individuals. As well, the rate of Cesarean births is up, sometimes for reasons of convenience rather than medical necessity, exposing the baby and mother to unnecessary surgical risk.

Dr. Wynne points out that routine chest X-rays, stress tests, and MRIs for headaches and knees are good examples of tests no longer thought to be useful as often or early as they were once prescribed. It’s a time to question our assumptions and use the partnership between physician and patient to make the right choice for the individual,” he concludes. “It’s just good medicine.”

Did you know....

New technology and exposure to pop culture medicine puts a heavy emphasis on health screenings and diagnostic testing. However, scientific evidence and updated guidelines are recommending a step back and a more thorough doctor/patient discussion about the risks and benefits of some tests.
Help for Healthy Travel

continued from page 1

review of your medical history and consultation with one of the clinical pharmacists. “We’re able to administer the vaccinations and write prescriptions when needed,” she continues. “In fact, if an individual is unsure whether they have received a specific vaccination, we have the ability to test for immunity during the visit. It’s a consolidated approach that makes things easier for our patients.”

It made things easier and more comfortable for Jeff Persh, who thoroughly enjoyed his three-week vacation in Thailand. “Although I was going to cities and eating at nice hotels where the health risks are lower, I didn’t want to take chances,” he said. “Cedars-Sinai answered my questions and gave me helpful information and recommendations, along with precautionary prescriptions.” Persh says he felt safer and more confident, even though he didn’t end up needing any of the medications.

**What is the Process for Scheduling a Consultation?**

Some immunizations and medications must be taken one or more months prior to your trip to be effective, so be sure to schedule an appointment well in advance. You’ll be asked to fill out a travel history form and send it in prior to your visit, so that your personalized travel package is available when you arrive. Your visit typically lasts about 30 minutes.

Most health insurance plans do not cover the cost of the office visit or the vaccinations, but the consultation fee and immunizations are offered at reasonable and competitive prices.

For more information about travel consultation and immunization services at Cedars-Sinai Medical Group, please call the Travel Medicine Clinic at (310) 385-3534 and press option 3. The Clinic is located in Suite 601 at 250 N. Robertson Blvd. in Beverly Hills. Visit us at www.cedars-sinairemedicalgroup.org.

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**Bringing Healthcare Reform Home**

Healthcare reform is an all-encompassing term that is being defined in the public eye on a national level, but in reality, the issue hits home on a very personal basis for many people. Across the country, a shortage of primary care physicians is making it more difficult for patients to get the care they need. At a time when the population is aging and the level of chronic illness is rising, a shortfall of about 40,000 primary care doctors is anticipated over the next decade.

At Cedars-Sinai Medical Group, we are proactively evaluating how patient care is delivered through your primary care physicians’ offices. We’re working to redesign our care model, with the goal to simplify your access to quality healthcare, enhance your level of satisfaction and ultimately improve your health.

**A Medical Home for Our Patients**

Our Medical Group slogan for many years has been “your partners in good health.” The “medical home” model of care is an expanded approach to providing patient care that extends the partnership beyond you and your physician to include a team of experts who know you and are focused on meeting the full range of your care needs. When appropriate, your family becomes a part of that partnership as well.

The most important relationship continues to be the one you have with your doctor, who serves as the coordinator of all your care and the leader of a team that may include nurses, physician assistants, clinical pharmacists and disease management educators. Your care team is focused on optimizing your Medical Group healthcare experience, and allows us to give you more attention when you need it. This is particularly important if you suffer from a chronic illness like diabetes, for example, where you might work closely with a dietitian, a clinical pharmacist and a disease management specialist to help you monitor and control your symptoms through better nutrition and appropriate medication.

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**Piloting Our Concept and Monitoring Its Effect**

Some aspects of this care team concept are already in place at the Medical Group, especially for those with chronic conditions. The approach has been highly successful.

Expanding upon that, we are piloting a broader-ranging medical home program beginning this summer. This expanded “team” approach to your care will be tested in eleven internal medicine practices at the Medical Group and will be evaluated closely over a period of several months. We’ll measure patient and physician satisfaction, clinical outcomes, convenience and ease of access, making adjustments as needed to improve the system.

Our goal is to enhance service to our patients with a model that is sustainable and adaptable throughout the Medical Group. I look forward to reporting back to you about our results as we continue our own front line efforts to reform healthcare for the benefit of our patients and physicians.
Beginning in November 2009, audiology services for all age groups were added to the quality diagnosis and treatment of ear, nose, throat, and head and neck disorders provided by the Medical Group’s otolaryngology team. Drs. Gene Liu and Lily Love, and their certified physician assistant Raquel Vasquez, will soon be joined by a third physician, Dr. Lei Zhuang, who will add her noteworthy credentials as a pediatric fellowship-trained otolaryngologist to the group. They are all available in the same office with certified audiologists Colleen Moryl and Lisa Berliner.

“Much like getting an eye exam, patients with hearing loss may not need to see a medical doctor, but need a thorough diagnostic evaluation of their hearing,” Dr. Liu explains. “With the addition of audiology services in our office, a patient’s personal physician can now refer them directly to our audiologists. They will provide comprehensive testing and treatment, and if they find something abnormal, Dr. Love, Ms. Vasquez and I are easily accessible for consultation.”

The new, shared office is fully equipped with the latest, highly sensitive technology, including a soundproof booth with a state-of-the-art audiometer for evaluation of hearing loss. The collaboration streamlines the process for patients, with no need for referral to an outside service for testing and secondary appointments to discuss results. Most patients need go nowhere else except when they order their hearing aids.

“With the addition of our audiology services, the five of us are able to work together with the primary care physician to support the full-range of our patients’ needs,” Dr. Liu concludes. “We have more control, and therefore consistency, in the testing and results. Most importantly, it is more convenient for our patients, and they get the results and treatment they need more quickly.”

Cedars-Sinai Medical Group otolaryngology and audiology services are located at 8631 West 3rd Street, Suite 640E in Los Angeles. The office will soon be open extended hours to better accommodate patient schedules. Call (310) 423-1220 for appointments.

How Do You Know if You Have Hearing Loss?

For adults:

- You complain that people mumble or you hear only parts of conversations.
- You often ask people to repeat what they said.
- Your friends or relatives mention your hearing.
- You need to ask others about the details of a meeting that you just attended.
- Others say you play the TV or radio too loudly.
- You have a problem hearing on the telephone.
- You find that looking at people when they talk makes it somewhat easier to understand, especially with a noisy background.
- You have dizziness, pain, or ringing in your ears.

For children:

- Inconsistent response to sound or to being called.
- Language and speech development is delayed.
- Speech is unclear.
- Sound is turned up on electronic equipment (radio, TV, cd player, etc.).
- Does not follow directions.
- Often says “Huh?”

Do You Hear What I Hear?

Most of us have experienced it at one time or another. You leave the Staples Center after an especially enthusiastic Lakers game or a very loud concert, and your ears are ringing. It likely goes away after a short time, but for those suffering from tinnitus, it does not.

What is Tinnitus?

Tinnitus is defined as the perception of sound in the head when no external sound is present. It’s a symptom of an underlying problem, not a disease in and of itself. In fact, it is quite common. The noise is often described as a ringing sound, but it varies from individual to individual. It may be constant or intermittent or triggered by external factors such as loud noises.

What Causes Tinnitus?

Tinnitus is most often associated with exposure to loud noises. In fact, that Lakers game or concert is a risk factor. However, there are many other potential causes, including medications you are taking and physical issues associated with allergies, diet, blood pressure, kidney function, auditory system problems and even stress.

How Can You Get Help?

It’s important to see your Cedars-Sinai Medical Group primary care physician for a medical examination to first rule out potentially serious physical factors that could be the root cause of the tinnitus. Also talk with your doctor about allergies, stress, and the medications you are taking, as there are over 200 prescription and over-the-counter drugs that can impact your hearing. The next step is an evaluation by one of the Medical Group’s certified audiologists to determine if hearing loss is present.

Is Tinnitus Treatable?

Successful treatment is unique to each individual and will likely require the support of your doctor, audiologist and/or a Cedars-Sinai Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) specialist. Treatment of the physical causes, a change in medication or lifestyle modifications may resolve the tinnitus. In other cases, methods to mask the symptoms and other rehabilitation techniques may help you adjust to the sound and limit the impact on your life.

For further information and to identify a support group near you, contact the American Tinnitus Association at www.ata.org

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Executive Health: A Smart Investment

A proactive approach to your health is a sound investment in the future, and for executives facing today’s economic challenges, it makes good business sense as well. That’s why Cedars-Sinai Medical Group developed our Executive Medical Services program.

Under the guidance of Medical Director Stewart Middler, MD, Executive Medical Services offers convenient, state-of-the-art health evaluations and assessment packages unique to the needs of busy decision makers. The evaluation is comprehensive in scope and utilizes the most sophisticated diagnostic techniques and technological tools available.

Recognizing that time is at a premium for high-performing managers, the evaluation program is designed to be completed in one day in most cases. There are varying packages to choose from, and examinations are tailored to fit the participant’s personal and occupational profile, including age, gender, ethnicity and medical status.

On completion of the health review, a confidential summary report, complete with results of screenings, laboratory tests and a lifestyle assessment, is mailed to the executive. Health risks are noted and recommendations for further counseling or preventive tests are explained.

To Arrange a Health Assessment

Our experienced Executive Medical Services staff will answer your questions, help with selection of the appropriate package for you and arrange a date for a health evaluation to accommodate your busy business and travel schedule.

The program office is located at 8635 W. Third Street, Suite 995 West, on the campus of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. To schedule an appointment, call them directly at (310) 423-2374.

Electrical Medical Records: Take the Next Steps

Since the Electrical Medical Records (EMR) system was introduced at Cedars-Sinai Medical Group in 2006, patients have benefited from the resulting improvements in the coordination of their care between the Medical Group physicians treating them.

As with all technology, system capabilities are expanding rapidly, so it’s already time for an upgrade. A progressive transition to a new and improved system began in mid-April and promises to advance Medical Group performance, and ultimately patient satisfaction, to new levels.

The concept of EMRs is simple. One electronic record for a patient is instantly accessible online to physicians who treat the patient. It contains the individual’s medical history, including allergies, treatments and medications from all doctors. There is no risk of misinterpretation of handwriting, and each person’s information remains accessible only to those with a need to know.

In the near future, this new, leading-edge technology will allow a patient’s medical records to be accessed for any services provided throughout the Cedars-Sinai Health System, not just at the Medical Group, according to Thomas Gordon, chief executive officer of the Cedars-Sinai Medical Delivery Network. It’s already available to Medical Center emergency physicians. The bar will be raised in terms of online communication and access to educational materials, and ultimately there will be more interactive tools for patients.

Of course, with new technology comes training and a learning curve. “During the first weeks of the transition, our Medical Group physicians’ schedules were reduced to accommodate education on the new technology,” states Gordon. “We have worked to limit the disruption and ensure that our patients’ urgent needs are met. We really appreciate the overall flexibility and understanding so many have shown throughout this period, their willingness to delay non-essential office visits or adapt their schedules. In the end, we are confident the benefits to them will be great.”
Meet Our New Care Team Members

As Cedars-Sinai Medical Group expands to provide services responsive to the needs of our patients, some exceptional individuals have joined our care team. We’d like to introduce them to you.

Physicians

Howard H. Kim, MD
Urology

Dr. Kim has a strong sense of community that drew him to the culture at Cedars-Sinai Medical Group. He believes his chosen specialty, urology, offers him a balance of innovative surgical procedures, medical treatments and the opportunity to build long-term relationships with his patients. “I treat many types of urological issues,” he explains. “It is a specialty where you can see tangible results and really help your patients.” One area of special interest for Dr. Kim is male infertility and sexual dysfunction.

Location: 8635 W. Third Street, Suites 460W & 870W
Los Angeles, CA 90048
(310) 652-8060

Medical Degree: University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine
San Francisco, California

Medical Education: Fellowship, Male Reproductive Medicine & Microsurgery
Weill Cornell Medical College & The Population Council
New York, New York

Warren Roston, MD
Pulmonology

The fulfilling part of medical practice for Dr. Roston is taking care of his patients. “I want to make people feel better,” he explains. “That’s what they need, and that’s what I do. Much of what we do in pulmonary medicine is to help people enjoy a better quality of life, and our patients are very appreciative of that.” In addition to a wealth of education and experience, Dr. Roston adds what he sees as essential ingredients of care. “It’s important to listen well and be compassionate, and you can never discount the importance of humor.”

Location: 250 N. Robertson Blvd, Suite 606
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
(310) 385-2940

Board Certification:
Board Certified, Internal Medicine
Board Certified, Pulmonary Disease
Board Certified, Critical Care Medicine
Board Certified, Medical Examiner

Medical Degree: University of San Francisco School of Medicine
San Francisco, California

Medical Education: Residency, Respiratory Physiology and Pulmonary Medicine
Harbor/UCLA Medical Center
Torrance, California
Internship and Residency
Internal Medicine
Michael Reese Hospital & Medical Center
Chicago, Illinois

Nurse Practitioner

Olga Slavinskaya, RN, MSN, ANP- BC
Nurse Practitioner, Hospitalist Team

Patient care and compassion have been part of Olga Slavinskaya’s life since she joined Cedars-Sinai Medical Center’s cardiology nursing team seven years ago. “Nursing is a very rewarding profession,” she says. “That’s why I continued my education to become a nurse practitioner.” Today she is using that advanced knowledge as the newest member of the inpatient specialty program where she works directly with hospitalized patients, ensuring there is continuity in their care and that they get the rehabilitation they need after leaving the hospital.

Location: Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
8700 Beverly Blvd.
Los Angeles, California 90048

Credentials: Licensed Nurse Practitioner
Registered Nurse

Medical Education: Master of Science in Nursing
Adult Nurse Practitioner
California State University, Los Angeles

In the Spotlight

Cedars-Sinai Health System
President’s Award Winner

Sandy Heidner
Medical Assistant

Location: Office of James Caplan, MD
50 N. Robertson Blvd., Suite 606
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
(310) 385-3489

“I try to make our patients laugh. It makes them feel more at ease when I’m not afraid to be comfortable in front of them,” explains Sandy Heidner, a Cedars-Sinai Medical Group medical assistant in Dr. James Caplan’s office. “Laughter breaks down the barriers and releases the tension.”

Heidner has been helping patients in Dr. Caplan’s office smile more and feel relaxed about their visits for the past 17 years. Her caring nature and fun-loving approach to providing excellent care have not gone unnoticed. Letters from patients expressing their gratitude and respect for her role in their care are part of the reason she was selected as a Cedars-Sinai President’s Award Winner in April 2009.

Although Heidner enjoys making light of a stressful situation, she takes her job seriously. She enjoys reading all things medical—journals, reviews and magazines—to stay on top of what’s happening in the field. “I want to be as informed as I can be,” she says emphatically. She also goes the distance to form relationships with everyone she encounters. “I enjoy taking time to listen, allowing our patients to talk and express their concerns even before the doctor enters the room. I make it a priority to get to know them so they feel comfortable here.”

Over her many years in Dr. Caplan’s office, Heidner has gotten to know the long-time patients very well. “With some, we have become like family. I know a lot about their lives and their families,” she explains. “That’s what it’s all about. I really enjoy going to work because I care about the people, and I think it’s fun to be here.”

Although she swears her job keeps her young, Heidner does have an eye to the future. After all, she’s been involved in the medical field since her candy striper work began at age 15. When it’s time, her dream is to retire in Maui. Until then, you can find her filling Dr. Caplan’s office with laughter and smiles.

I make it a priority to get to know our patients so they feel comfortable here.
Same-Day Care for Your Urgent Needs

Cedars-Sinai Medical Group’s Urgent Care Center is designed to help you meet your unexpected medical needs when your primary care doctor or pediatrician is not available. The Center’s primary care physicians, pediatricians and urgent care-trained physician assistants are members of the Cedars-Sinai Medical Group and provide the same standard of excellence in patient care to diagnose and treat your flu, cold, fever or any illness that needs immediate attention.

Same-day appointments and after-hours care are available at the Center, 8501 Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and Saturday through Sunday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Of course, if you have a serious health problem, call 911 or go to the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center emergency department.

Voice of the Customer Program: WE CARE

Our goal is to provide you with high-quality medical care, excellent customer service and a strong mix of programs and services responsive to your needs. Our team of physicians, caregivers and support staff are all focused on serving you.

In order to achieve our quality care and service goals, we need to hear from you. Your concerns, suggestions and general feedback about the quality of care and services you receive will help to make us even better at what we do.

Should you have any issues at any time, our care team meets bi-weekly to investigate and resolve your concerns and to fine-tune our policies and procedures to better serve you.

Please call our Patient Services Department at (800) 700-6424 Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., with any issues you may wish to discuss.

Learn More about Us

At Cedars-Sinai Medical Group, your good health is our first priority. We view ourselves as your partner, there to support you in your wellness and preventive efforts, as well as to treat and care for you when illness or injury occurs.

To learn more about any of our Cedars-Sinai Medical Group physicians, specialty services, wellness classes, physician office locations and phone numbers, please visit our website at www.Cedars-SinaiMedicalGroup.org. Or, call our Patient Services Department at (800) 700-6424, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Gain Weight Eating Late
The bewitching hour is for sleep, not eating. A new study confirms that you’re more likely to gain weight if you reach for snacks late at night. To prevent unwanted weight gain, make sure to eat balanced, healthy meals earlier in the evening.

Adult Gaming Expands the Brain
Video games are not just for kids. It turns out they require you to think in a new way and to hone your skills in pattern recognition, system thinking and more. Playing along allows the brain to develop new connections between neurons and synapses, exercising the mind the way physical activity exercises the body.

Scribbling Can Improve Memory
A recent study found that people who doodle while listening to a phone message or doing a boring task, remembered 29% more of the content than those who didn’t doodle.

Carb Load May Harm Your Liver
A diet over-rich in carbohydrates can have harmful effects on the liver, which converts them to fats. Make sure to eat a balanced diet with an adequate amount of protein as well as carbs.

Volunteer for Life
In a study of retirees over age 65, those who volunteered their time had a lower death rate. In another study it was found that those who did some type of paid work after retirement had fewer major diseases. If you can, keep active, take time and lend a helping hand and your expertise. It’s good for everyone.

Palm Oil’s Not the Answer
Palm oil is not a healthy substitute for trans fat. Although it has been praised by some for its health benefits, including high levels of vitamin E, it is high in saturated fat and raises levels of LDL, the bad cholesterol. It is recommended that you stick to those foods that contain olive or canola oil.

Chronic Stress and Heart Attack
The link between stress and heart disease has been the focus of many clinical studies in recent years, and not surprisingly, results show a definitive cause and effect. Although the levels of acceptable anxiety and stress vary greatly by individual, it is important to practice stress reduction techniques, get plenty of exercise, eat healthy and discuss your stressors with your doctor.

Revisit the Apple Cliché
If an apple a day will keep the doctor away, an orange a day may make your memory stay. Oranges contain folate, which helps you process and recall information.