

Why ‘superagers’ retain ‘super memories’ well into their 80s

“Superagers” – people aged 80 or over with exceptionally good memories – may have larger than expected neurons in a region of the brain that is critical for [memory](#).

With [age](#), most people experience a gradual decline to their memory, but some maintain a remarkable ability to recall past events into their eighties or older, on par with people 20 to 30 years younger.

Alongside a decline in memory, our brains naturally shrink with age, with previous studies suggesting this occurs less with superagers.

Now, [researchers have shown](#) that superagers may have larger than expected neurons in their entorhinal cortex, a component of the brain’s memory system.

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Among the superagers, their entorhinal cortex neurons were around 10 per cent larger than those of the people who died at a similar age with a to-be-expected memory.

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The superagers also had substantially fewer protein clumps called tau tangles inside their neurons than their counterparts who died at a similar age. An abnormal build-up of tau has been suggested as a cause of [Alzheimer's disease](#).

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According to [Joseph Andreano](#), also at Harvard Medical School, other brain regions linked to [cognition](#) have been shown to differ in size in superagers compared with people with a to-be-expected memory. It is unclear whether neuron size in the entorhinal cortex specifically accounts for enhanced memory, he says.

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