

I Am Worried About Memory Loss—What Should I Know?

Memory loss is a common worry when people get older, but it can happen for different reasons.

What Happens to Memory and Thinking Skills With Aging?

Some thinking skills like knowledge and wisdom improve with age. Changes in memory, thinking, and reasoning are common with aging. Having trouble remembering someone's name or misplacing items can be a normal part of getting older.

When Should I Worry About Memory Loss?

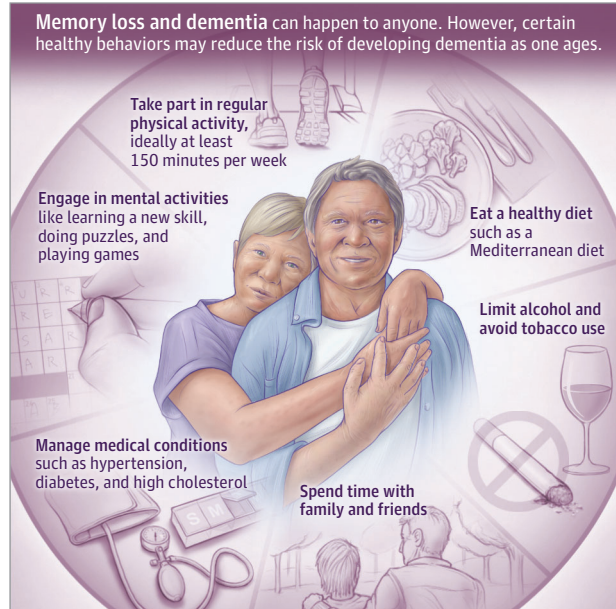
See your doctor if your memory loss affects your ability to do your normal daily activities. Examples include trouble remembering details of recent events or conversations, difficulty thinking of common words, getting lost in familiar places, or having problems doing something you used to be able to do with ease. See your doctor if someone close to you has concerns about your memory.

What Is Dementia, and How Is It Diagnosed?

Dementia is not a specific illness but describes different conditions where there is a loss of memory, thinking, and decision-making skills. Evaluation starts with a visit to your primary care clinician, who will ask questions and may perform a brief test of your memory. Blood tests are done to rule out treatable medical causes of memory loss. Referral to a specialist may be necessary if your primary care clinician suspects that you may be developing dementia or have another neurologic condition. A dementia specialist will ask about symptoms, do a more detailed test of memory and thinking skills, and may order additional tests and procedures.

What Can I Do to Prevent Memory Loss?

Take part in regular physical activity (at least 150 minutes/week), such as walking or joining an exercise class. Eat a healthy diet and maintain a healthy weight. A Mediterranean diet or the Mediterranean-DASH Diet Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay may slow memory loss and reduce the risk of developing dementia. Maintain good control of medical conditions, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, sleep apnea, or hearing loss. Mental activities are important to maintain healthy memory function. This can include working, volunteering, learning a new skill, reading, doing puzzles, and playing games. Spend time with friends and family and join groups like a book club or programs at the local senior center. Limit alcohol use to less than 1 drink per day and avoid tobacco use. Seek treatment if you feel depressed or anxious. If you are hospitalized for a medical or surgical reason, ask your medical team about ways to protect cognitive health.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Institute on Aging
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/memory-loss-and-forgetfulness/memory-problems-forgetfulness-and-aging>

MIND diet
<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-weight/diet-reviews/mind-diet/>

What About Treatments Sold Over the Counter?

Over-the-counter treatments and those sold online are not safe and should be avoided. They are not regulated by the US Food and Drug Administration and do not have quality evidence supporting their use. They may be mislabeled and contain harmful ingredients.

What Else Can I Do to Feel Better?

Talk to your doctor about your memory concerns. Memory loss can be due to many different health conditions, so it is important to make the right diagnosis to find the right treatment.

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