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Links for more information:

Memory tests for Alzheimer's and Dementia

<http://www.alzheimersreadingroom.com/2016/04/alzheimers-dementia-memory-test.html>

Tips For Memory Support

- See your healthcare professional regularly
- Exercise at least 30 minutes, 3 times a week
- Get enough sleep
- Eat a balanced, good diet
- Practice stress reduction
- Keep hydrated
- Don't do two or more tasks at once (multi-tasking)
- Certain medications can affect your memory
- Chronic health conditions contribute to memory problems
- Write down your appointments and tasks
- Assign specific places for specific items.

We've all misplaced keys, blanked on an acquaintance's name, or forgotten a phone number. When we're young, we don't tend to pay much mind to these lapses, but as we grow older, we sometimes worry about what they mean. While it's true that certain brain changes are inevitable when it comes to aging, major memory problems are not one of them. That's why it's important to know the difference between normal age-related forgetfulness and the symptoms that may indicate a developing cognitive problem.



Memory and Aging

Forgetfulness is a common complaint among older adults. You start to talk about a movie you saw recently when you realize you can't remember the title. You're giving directions to your house when you suddenly blank on a familiar street name. You find yourself standing in the middle of the kitchen wondering what you went in there for.

Memory lapses can be frustrating, but most of the time they aren't cause for concern. Age-related memory changes are not the same thing as dementia. As we grow older, we experience physiological changes that can cause glitches in brain functions we've always taken for granted. It takes longer to learn and recall information. We're not as quick as we used to be. In fact, we often mistake this slowing of our mental processes for true memory loss. But in most cases, if we give ourselves time, the information will come to mind.

Memory loss is not an inevitable part of the aging process. The brain is capable of producing new brain cells at any age, so significant memory loss is *not* an inevitable result of aging. But just as it is with muscle strength, you have to use it or you lose it. Your lifestyle, health habits, and daily activities have a huge impact on the health of your brain. Whatever your age, there are many ways you can improve your cognitive skills, prevent memory loss, and protect your grey matter.

Furthermore, many mental abilities are largely unaffected by normal aging, such as:

- Your ability to do the things you've always done and continue to do often
- The wisdom and knowledge you've acquired from life experience.
- Your innate common sense and your ability to form reasonable arguments and judgments

Normal Forgetfulness vs. Dementia

For most people, occasional lapses in memory are a normal part of the aging process, not a warning sign of serious mental deterioration or the onset of dementia.

Normal age-related forgetfulness

The following types of memory lapses are normal among older adults and generally are *not* considered warning signs of dementia:

- Occasionally forgetting where you left things you use regularly, such as glasses or keys.
- Forgetting names of acquaintances or blocking one memory with a similar one, such as calling your grandson by your son's name.
- Occasionally forgetting an appointment or walking into a room and forgetting why you entered.
- Becoming easily distracted or having trouble remembering what you've just read or the details of a conversation.
- Not quite being able to retrieve information you have "on the tip of your tongue."

Three Causes of Age-Related Memory Loss

1. The hippocampus, a region of the brain involved in the formation and retrieval of memories, often deteriorates with age.
2. Hormones and proteins that protect and repair brain cells and stimulate neural growth also decline with age.
3. Older people often experience decreased blood flow to the brain, which can impair memory and lead to changes in cognitive skills.



Normal age-related memory changes	Symptoms that may indicate dementia
Able to function independently and pursue normal activities, despite occasional lapses of memory	Difficulty performing simple tasks (paying bills, dressing appropriately, washing up); forgetting how to do things you've done many times
Able to recall and describe incidents of forgetfulness	Unable to recall or describe specific instances where memory loss caused problems
May pause to remember directions, but doesn't get lost in familiar places	Gets lost or disoriented even in familiar places; unable to follow directions
Occasional difficulty finding the right word, but no trouble holding a conversation	Words are frequently forgotten, misused, or garbled; phrases and stories are repeated in the same conversation
Judgment and decision-making ability the same as always	Trouble making choices; may show poor judgment or behave in socially inappropriate ways