

Mild Cognitive Impairment

What Is Mild Cognitive Impairment?

During the past few years, medical researchers have identified a specific type of memory change called Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI). MCI is different from the memory changes people normally experience as they grow older. It is also different from dementia conditions such as Alzheimer's Disease.

People with MCI often have a specific problem making and recalling new memories (the kind of memory that takes place when we learn). These memory changes are often first noticed by the person themselves or by a close friend or family member. People with MCI do not usually have other signs of dementia, such as confusion, attention problems, difficulty with language, or difficulty doing daily activities.

Tests, usually done by a neuropsychologist, can help to determine if the memory changes might be MCI.

What Does It Mean to Have MCI?

Some research indicates that people with MCI develop dementia more often than other people in their age group. Approximately one-half of people with MCI will develop a dementia diagnosis within 5 years, although half do not.

What Can I Do?

People with MCI should be made aware of their condition so that they can do everything possible to stay healthy and maintain brain function.

Your doctor will review all your medications to see if any of them have side effects that might affect your memory. If so, these medications may be able to be changed or discontinued.

What Can I Do?
continued

Irritability and depression can often occur when people realize they are having memory problems. Treatment of the depression can help people feel better and may help to manage the memory problem.

Treating conditions that increase the risk of dementia, such as heart disease and problems with the circulatory system (blood vessels), can also help to maintain a healthy brain. Treating high blood pressure, controlling cholesterol, and stopping smoking are all important ways to reduce these risk factors.

A number of research studies have suggested that our lifestyle has an effect on our memory and our risk of developing dementia. Make healthy life style choices:

- Eat a healthy, low fat diet.
- Exercise and stay physically active.
- Remain mentally active by doing activities that exercise learning and memory.
- Stay involved in social activities you enjoy.

If you have a diagnosis of MCI, there are many ways to get the help and support you may need either now or in the future:

- Tell your friends and family about your condition.
- Work with your doctor to stay active and involved in your own care.
- Join a support group with people who are having similar experiences (You can find about these through your local Senior Center or Alzheimer's Association chapter.)