

Memory Loss (Dementia)

A GUIDE FOR PATIENTS AND FAMILIES



For further information

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This brochure provides information about symptoms of memory loss in elderly patients. This has been developed in response to questions frequently asked by patients and their families.



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Memory loss

As we age, our brain functions slow down at times resulting in difficulty in remembering facts stored in our memory. It also takes more time and effort to learn something new. Common examples of age-related memory changes are forgetting names of people that you know, or taking extra time to remember where the keys are kept and so on.

When is memory loss a concern?

Memory loss becomes a concern when it starts affecting a person's daily routine. Common examples of this are forgetting when the last meal was eaten, or being unable to recall the way back home. These symptoms of memory loss are of a brain disease called Dementia.

Who is at risk of Dementia?

- The elderly are most vulnerable (Dementia almost always occurs in old age). There are different types of dementia - the most common is Alzheimer's which is sometimes hereditary.
- High blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol and chronic depression can also put people at risk for dementia.
- Smokers and alcohol users may also be at risk.

What can be done for Dementia?

- It is important to see a doctor for memory loss, particularly dementia. Sometimes depression, vitamin deficiencies, or hormone problems may contribute to memory loss which can be treated by your physician.
- Even though there is no cure dementia, it can still be managed and controlled by proper treatment and advice.

What other changes can be seen in patients suffering from Dementia?

- Patients may experience changes in personality such as:
- Becoming quiet and withdrawn.
- Getting easily irritable or frustrated.
- Insomnia (difficulty sleeping at night) and restlessness.

How can we help our family member(s) with Dementia?

Dementia is an illness that affects not only the patient but also his/her family members. Family members can support their loved one by helping them:

- Maintain a regular schedule for meals, shower, exercise, and sleep time.
- Supervise intake of medicines as the patients may either forget or at times take more medicine than required.
- By being cautious regarding their safety particularly when they are driving or using stoves or are involved in any other activity that might result in injury.

Can memory loss be prevented?

- Some of the following steps may decrease the chances of memory loss
- By adopting a healthy lifestyle through diet and regular exercise
- By controlling diabetes, blood pressure and cholesterol.
- By avoiding alcohol and smoking.
- By keeping the mind active through reading, solving crossword puzzles, managing home budgets.