

Memory Loss and Aging

We all forget things, such as where we put our car keys or even someone's name. As we get older, it may feel like this happens more often. It is normal to forget things once in a while. It may also take longer to learn new things. This is normal and should not worry you.

When should I be concerned about memory loss?

Examples of memory loss that may be a sign of a more serious problem are:

- Not knowing a close family member.
- Getting lost in a familiar place.
- Forgetting how to use a common object such as a phone.

When should I discuss my memory concerns with a health care provider?

Memory problems are those that reduce your ability to carry out normal daily chores. Signs of memory problems that you should talk to your health care provider about can include:

- Having trouble doing daily chores.
- Having problems with tasks you normally find easy to do such as driving a car, shopping, or handling money.
- Getting lost going to places you have been many times.
- Being confused about time, people, places or events.
- Forgetting to bathe, eat or do daily tasks.

What to Do If You Are Concerned

Contact your health care team if you think you are having a problem with your memory. Let the team help you find the reason for your memory loss and potential ways to treat, prevent, or cope with it.

Some memory problems are treatable by improving diet, sleep or removing stressors from your life. Some treatable memory problems are:

- Vitamin B12 deficiency
- Injury or disease
- Infections
- Surgery
- Certain medicines
- Poor diet or not enough fluids in the body
- Depression
- Seizures
- Strokes
- Alcohol abuse
- Thyroid problems

Coping with Memory Problems

- Visit your doctor and follow their advice
- Use big calendars
- Make a daily list of chores
- Write notes to yourself
- Print out steps for using household items
- Keep items you use often in the same place
- Use pill boxes and write down the times you take your medicines. Keep this list with your medicines. You can even add pictures of the pills with the list.

Healthy Body, Healthy Brain

You can keep your brain healthy by keeping your body healthy. Some steps you can take include:

- Staying active
- Eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, fish, and other lean proteins (avoid too much salt, fat and sugar)
- Getting enough rest

- Avoiding excess alcohol
- Reducing stress in your life
- Getting regular check-ups
- Keeping your brain active and make time for hobbies
- Meeting new people, connecting with family or friends
- Volunteering

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©6/2021. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6977.