

Health & Wellness

Normal Age-Related Memory Vs. Dementia



Kristi Marx, LCSW

Many of us can admit to having a “senior moment” from time to time. You forget where to put your keys. You walk in a room and forget what you went in for. You even forget a doctor’s appointment. Forgetting things occasionally is normal, and as we age, forgetting things becomes more common. But when should you worry about your forgetfulness being a sign of a type of dementia including Alzheimer’s disease?

Normal Age-Related Memory Loss vs. Dementia

Age-associated memory impairment and dementia can be distinguished in several ways. Below are some examples:

Normal Aging	Dementia
Not being able to remember details of a conversation or event that took place a year ago	Not being able to recall details of recent events or conversations
Not being able to remember the name of an acquaintance	Not recognizing or knowing the names of family members
Forgetting things and events occasionally	Forgetting things or events more frequently
Occasionally have difficulty finding words	Frequent pauses and substitutions when finding words
You are worried about your memory, but your relatives are not	Your relatives are worried about your memory, but you are not aware of any problems

Tips for coping with normal age-related memory difficulties:

- Repeat information (repeat names when you meet people)
- Run through the alphabet in your head to help you remember a word
- Make associations (relate new information to things you already know)
- Play games and work puzzles.

It’s important to know that forgetting someone’s name doesn’t necessarily mean that you are getting dementia. However, it’s equally important to see a neurologist if you or your family have concerns.