

Early Warning Signs of a Memory Problem



- **Gradual memory loss**, forgetting things more often — and not remembering them later

- **Difficulty learning new things**

- **Forgetting simple words**, or trouble naming common objects

- **Getting lost**, even in familiar places

- **Misplacing things**, or finding them in odd places

- **Unusual changes in mood**, personality, or behavior

- **Decreased judgment** and insight about things like dressing, or money

- **Loss of initiative**, sleeping more, less interest in activities

- **Difficulty with familiar tasks** such as cooking, hobbies, or driving



The information contained in this publication does not constitute legal or medical advice and should not be used as a substitute for the medical care or advice of your physician. Indications and recommendations may vary based on individual facts and circumstances.

Developed by the

alzheimer's association

Massachusetts Chapter

36 Cameron Avenue

Cambridge, MA 02140

www.alzmass.org

24-hour Helpline: 800-548-2111

The Alzheimer's Association provides information and support, including patient logs, free to patients, families, physicians, and other care partners.

With appreciation to the



Massachusetts Medical Society

Department of Public Health and Education

860 Winter Street

Waltham, MA 02451

www.massmed.org

For additional copies, call (800) 843-6356

We thank the Alzheimer's Association (Los Angeles) for material adapted from the booklet, *Working with Your Doctor When You Suspect Memory Problems*.

Saving a Million Memories



How to Partner with Your Doctor for Early Detection of a Memory Disorder

Brought to you by the
Massachusetts Medical Society
and the Alzheimer's Association,
Massachusetts Chapter

Why Seek Help for Memory Loss?

Memory loss that gets worse over time may be a symptom of dementia. *It is not a part of normal aging.*

There is no single test to tell if someone has dementia. A diagnosis is made only through a complete assessment that considers all possible causes.

There are other causes of memory loss besides dementia. When these are treated, memory often improves.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia. It causes problems with memory, thinking, and behavior. More than 4.5 million older Americans have it.

Your doctor may need to order a number of tests. And if the diagnosis is Alzheimer's, early intervention can often delay debilitating symptoms. Many effective drugs are now available, as are other treatments to help manage daily life.

Today, much can be done to treat people with this disease and help their families.

Should you or someone you care for show key warning signs of memory loss, see your doctor right away.

Partnering with Your Doctor

A proper diagnosis is essential to good care and planning. Knowing the cause of the memory loss can be upsetting, but it can also bring relief. It is the first step to partnering with your doctor to understand the disease, and to begin important treatments.



Another way to partner with your doctor is to keep a log. A log is a simple, one-page sheet you use to track memory changes that the doctor needs to know about. To get your logs free, see back panel.

Care Log



Planning for an Office Visit

Doctors want to make the best use of the time they spend with patients and their families during office visits. You can help by being prepared.

- Bring all medications to the visit, both prescription and over-the-counter (vitamins, aspirin). Let the doctor know if they're being taken as recommended.
- Make a list of current and past medical problems, and any surgical history.
- Let the doctor know if other family members had memory problems.
- Answer questions to the best of your ability. Be open and honest with your answers.
- Make a list of any signs of failing memory, when they began, and how often they occur.
- Be specific. For example, "Last week, he (I) got lost on the way home from the store. It was scary."
- Ask the doctor to explain the process of making a diagnosis, and any other questions you may have.

Research shows that people who prepare for a doctor's office visit often get better health care.