

Memory and Aging - What's Normal and What's Not?



Memory is made up of a group of systems that each play a different role in creating, storing and retrieving memory.

What seems like a single memory is actually a complex construction.

Memories are built upon each other, using interrelated meaning and significance that form specific memories.

FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE MEMORY PROCESS

- attention
- stress/anxiety
- depression, negative expectations
- loss and grief
- inactivity or isolation
- fatigue
- physical illness
- medication side effects
- vision/hearing problems
- alcohol abuse
- poor nutrition, dehydration
- heart and lung disorders that deprive the brain of oxygen
- diseases of the thyroid, pituitary or adrenal glands that regulate memory





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NORMAL AGING

- slower, but able to perform familiar tasks
- changes in eyesight, hearing & other senses
- remains active with hobbies, friends & family
- periodic forgetfulness but remembers later
- processes information more slowly than in the past
- occasional word finding difficulty

DEMENTIA

- trouble with routine tasks & following instructions
- changes in personality
- apathy or depression; no motivation or drive
- doesn't remember entire events or circumstances
- gets confused; uses poor or decreased judgment

NORMAL FORGETFULNESS

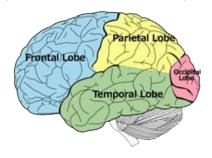
- forgetting where you put your keys
- forgetting where you put your checkbook
- forgetting what you ate for breakfast yesterday
- walking into a room & forgetting why
- getting lost in an unfamiliar place
- forgetting where you parked your car in the lot

MEMORY LOSS

- forgetting why or how your keys are used
- forgetting which bank your money is in
- forgetting what you ate 15 minutes ago
- getting disoriented in your own home
- getting lost in your own neighborhood
- forgetting that you drove to the mall

ABNORMAL IN OLDER ADULTS

- forgetting names of close friends & relatives
- inability to pay bills or balance a checkbook
- inability to read a map or recipe
- inability to follow simple directions
- inability to remember basic daily functions



WHEN MEMORY PROBLEMS ARISE

- make a list of "to do" items daily
- don't rush/allow time
- keep everything in a specific place
- use associations to remember items
- keep calendar with important dates
- establish daily routine
- talk to your doctor