

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

