

# Normal Aging vs Dementia

By Susan Robertson, MMD

Working in health care I often get questions regarding dementia and Alzheimer's. While I am not really concerned that I am experiencing early signs of dementia (it is so easy to get caught up with those signs), I realize many people must feel the same way I do. This article is not intended as the answer to all your questions; it is intended to help you start focusing on what is important in maintaining a healthy lifestyle and feeling well.



So what should you expect in normal memory functions? The following would be considered "normal" when dealing with memory: recall of events/details of the past; ability to recognize what words mean, use vocabulary appropriately, and tie into a conversation; perception of location and time; comprehension of the functional nature of items (what is the use of a knife, fork, or keys).

Experiencing difficulty in learning new words, languages, or the definitions of poor recall of details; memory loss involving misplaced items, and occasional confusion regarding location and time are not automatic signs of dementia; however, they are related to aging (that other topic we don't like to talk about)! At this point you may be exhaling a breath of relief that you are okay even though you can never seem to find your car keys or your reading glasses when you need them.

Without going into the details about dementia and the related memory disorders, what can we do to help live a healthy lifestyle and maintain a healthy brain? Here are some suggestions:

- Get plenty of physical exercise
- Complete mental exercises routinely (crosswords, sudoku, brain age, etc)
- Get enough sleep
- Keep your Stress level low
- Monitor for Depression
- Maintain a normal blood pressure
- Maintain a healthy diet

Talk to your doctor if you have concerns/questions

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