

Understanding Memory As You Age



A National Lutheran Community

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “memory” as the power or process of reproducing or recalling what has been learned or retained. Memory can be so much more than recall – it can be an important means of connecting with loved ones and the greater community, so the thought of losing one’s memory is a scary one. As we grow older, our memory and recall abilities do experience subtle changes. Naturally as we age, we often find it difficult to remember certain things, but how do we know what is normal memory loss and what is something more concerning?



Consider these key differences:

Normal Memory Loss

Some degree of memory loss is fairly common when it comes to aging. These slight changes shouldn’t prevent you from living your life to the fullest. Below are some examples of common memory loss as a result of aging.

- Forgetting the date or a person’s name but remembering it later that day.
- Misplacing common household items like your glasses or keys but being able to retrace your steps to find them later.
- Forgetting or having trouble finding the right words once in a while.
- Making a bad decision once in a while.
- Changes in memory are manageable and don’t disrupt the ability to maintain a social life, work, or live independently.

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Call 301-719-5273 or visit: www.thevillageatrockville.org

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Concerning Memory Loss

It's important to recognize early warning signs and understand the differences between regular decline in memory as you age and a more serious problem. See below for some warning signs of Alzheimer's or dementia.

- Lose track of dates or the passage of time and not remembering later. You may forget where you are or how you got there.
- May put items in unusual places or lose items and not be able to retrace your steps to find them. People with Alzheimer's may accuse others of stealing.
- Difficulty speaking or following conversation. Those with Alzheimer's can find it hard to come up with the correct word and can repeat themselves.
- Making poor decisions or bad judgements a majority of the time. This may affect the ways in which you go about your day and any routines you may have.

If you notice one or more of these signs in either yourself or a loved one, it may be difficult to know what to do. While it can be nerve-racking to talk with a loved one about these signs, it is important, and it is also key to have a conversation with your family members and your doctor to get a proper evaluation. Addressing these warning signs early can help maintain your loved one's independence longer, and it also gives you time to explore your best options with a medical professional.



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