

Is It Normal Aging or Early Memory Loss?: Tips to Know the Difference

Many symptoms of early memory loss can look a lot like normal aging. Without understanding diseases like Alzheimer's and dementia, it can be hard to tell the difference. If you suspect that you or a loved one might be exhibiting early signs of memory loss, consider these comparisons between memory loss and normal aging:

1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life

Early Memory Loss: Forgetting new information or important names and dates, relying on memory aids and frequent reminders from family members

Normal Aging: Occasionally forgetting names or appointments, but remembering them later

2. Challenges in planning or solving problems

Early Memory Loss: Having difficulty making a plan and following it, having difficulty concentrating, especially when working with numbers or step-by-step instructions

Normal Aging: Making occasional errors when balancing a checkbook

3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks

Early Memory Loss: Forgetting where an item is kept, how to drive to a familiar place, or how to play their favorite game

Normal Aging: Sometimes needing help to record a TV show or access a computer program

4. Confusion with time or place

Early Memory Loss: Losing track of dates, seasons or the passage of time, forgetting where they are or how they got there

Normal Aging: Forgetting the date or day of the week but realizing it later

5. Trouble with visual images or spatial relationships

Early Memory Loss: Difficulty reading, judging distance or determining color

Normal Aging: Vision changes due to cataracts or low vision

6. New problems with words in speaking or writing

Early Memory Loss: Having trouble following a conversation or finding the right words, making up new words, stopping mid-sentence and not knowing how to continue

Normal Aging: Occasional trouble finding the right word

7. Losing the ability to retrace steps

Early Memory Loss: Misplacing things in unusual places and not knowing how to find them, may accuse others of stealing from them

Normal Aging: Misplacing an object but retraces steps to find it

8. Decreased or poor judgment

Early Memory Loss: Mishandling money and giving away large amounts to telemarketers, ceasing to take care of personal grooming or appearance

Normal Aging: Making a bad decision once in awhile

9. Withdrawal from work or social activities

Early Memory Loss: Removing themselves from hobbies and social situations, either because they have trouble remembering or are embarrassed by the changes they've experienced

Normal Aging: Occasional weariness of social obligations or the desire for some free time

10. Changes in mood or personality

Early Memory Loss: Becoming increasingly confused, anxious, suspicious, fearful or depressed, may be easily upset around people and places that are outside of their comfort zone

Normal Aging: Becoming irritable when lifelong routines get disrupted

As you can see, frequency and reason are good ways to tell if a loved one's behavior is due to memory loss or normal aging. If you recognize any of the early signs of memory loss in yourself or a loved one, see your doctor right away for further evaluation.

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Offering [supportive independent living, assisted living and memory care](#) services for families in Venice, Florida, Tuscan Gardens of Venetia Bay was founded with one simple, yet profound goal – to create a community worthy of our parents. In all we do, we are guided by the principles of family, [culture and engagement](#), working to represent the remarkable way of life our families deserve.

The essence of our community is made up not only of mere aesthetics, but an artfully designed lifestyle to bring out the best of what each day has to offer. From dedicated care that respects residents' individuality and dignity to a [lifestyle that nurtures their love of life](#), Tuscan Gardens was built to be more than just a residence, but a place to call home.

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