

Understanding Memory Loss & Dementia: A Patient's Guide

What is Dementia?

- Dementia is not just one disease - it's a group of conditions that affect:
 - Memory
 - Thinking
 - Daily life

Common Types of Dementia?

- Alzheimer's disease: most common
- Vascular dementia: blood vessel changes
- Lewy body dementia: movement and hallucinations
- Frontotemporal dementia: behavior and language changes

First Step - Doctor Visit: gives doctors a quick snapshot of memory & thinking

- Start with a conversation
- Medical history: medications, family history
- Physical & neurological exam
- Basic office memory tests:
 - Mini-Mental State Exam: orientation, recall, attention
 - Montreal Cognitive Assessment: memory, attention, language, problem-solving



Preparing & Planning for the Future

- Dementia is a journey - planning early helps:
 - Home safety
 - Caregiver support
 - Talking about wishes
- Psychiatrists can help with:
 - Depression, anxiety, or mood changes
 - Behavior changes
 - Connecting families with resources

Living with Dementia: What Helps

- Medicines: may help symptoms (donepezil, memantine, rivastigmine)
- Routine: consistent schedule reduces confusion
- Exercise: walking, stretching, movement
- Healthy diet: fruits, vegetables, omega-3s
- Cognitive activities: puzzles, reading, music
- Support: family, caregiver resources, community groups

Second Step- Test: Normal aging vs Dementia

- Blood work: vitamin B12, thyroid, other labs
- Brain imaging: CT/MRI rule out stroke, tumor, or shrinkage
- Neuropsychological testing: memory & thinking evaluation
 - Memory: short-term & long-term
 - Attention & concentration
 - Problem-solving & planning
 - Language & communication
 - Visuospatial skills