Age-Related Memory Problems

Should I Be Worried?
What’s Happening…?”

- Information processing is harder
- Recall is slower
- Learning new things takes longer
- Distractions are more intrusive
Is What’s Happening Normal?

- A certain amount of forgetfulness comes with age
It takes longer to remember things in later years

Especially if you are under pressure...
Factors That Affect Memory

- Fatigue
- Grief
- Depression
Illness Affects Memory

Examples:

- Hypertension
- Sensory Impairments
- Thyroid dysfunction
Information Overload Affects Memory

- Multi-tasking is more difficult
- A sense of “lost control” or ‘helplessness” compounds memory difficulties
Medications and Drugs are a Critical Factor in Memory Loss

- Prescription medications
- Over the counter medications
- Complementary/Alternative medications
Alcohol and Smoking Affect Memory

- **Alcohol:** chronic heavy consumption interferes with memory function (but moderate consumption provides less risk than not drinking at all)

- **Smoking:** smokers over 65 have 3.7 times greater risk of memory decline
Poor Nutrition Can Be a Factor in Memory Loss

Consider:

- Less saturated fat, high carbohydrate food
- More vegetables and whole grains
- Daily Vitamin supplement with folate
- Supplements of Vitamin E

Source: Nutrition: Concepts and Controversies, 8th edition
Not Paying Attention Affects Memory...

- ‘Concentrate on concentrating’
- Focus/use all senses
- Screen out distractions
- Avoid interruptions
- Test your memory periodically
Read through this list of items just once...concentrate on each word

Memory Matching Test

- Onions  Shrimp  Mangoes
- Plums   Tonic Water  Pasta
- Eggs    Mayonnaise  Ham
- Blackberries  Basil  Brownies
- Hazelnuts  Zucchini  Oatmeal

Source: Memory Assessment Clinic, Bethesda, Maryland
Lack of Physical Activity Affects Memory

- One option: 20-30 minutes/day of walking
Lack of Mental Stimulation and Isolation Affect Memory

Stay mentally active

Critical links:
- Social connectedness
- Social networks
When is Memory Loss a Significant Problem?

You do not remember what you forgot…
When is Memory Loss a Significant Problem?

It Impacts Your Lifestyle
When is Memory Loss a Significant Problem?

- Constructing new memories is difficult
When is Memory Loss a Significant Problem?

- Operating common appliances is difficult
Age Related Memory Loss… or Dementia?

- Ask: “Are all the possible causes considered and addressed?”
- Ask: “Does memory loss substantially interfere with daily functioning?”
- Ask: “Are family members and friends concerned?”
So What Can You Do About Memory Problems?

- Look for a cause…address it
  Example: Be alert to sleep, nutritional needs
- Focus on what you want to remember
  Example: Use eye contact, touch, repetition
- Stay mentally active:
- Your brain is a muscle; use it
- Use memory aids
Memory Aids include…

- Calendars, day planners,
- Book of days
- Sticky note reminders (in strategic places)
- Household cues (out-going mail placed near car keys)
- “To-do lists”
- Electronic reminders
- Labeling, color coding
- Imagery
- Exaggeration
- Repetition
Memory Aids….

- Use a “memory road map” to grow your memory
- Deal with factors that are in your control
The Road Map to Managing Memory Impairment

- Start with relaxation/deep breathing
- Take a moment to ask yourself: “What am I doing? “What do I need?”
- Make the connection; focus on being mentally active
- Maximize your use of memory aids
- Toss chaos; stay organized
- Make conscious choices about what you want to remember
Memory Loss: A Summary

- Age-associated memory impairment is a natural part of aging
- Always consider the possibility that memory loss is reversible
- Ways to manage memory loss abound—many are simple and easy to initiate