

# Memory Loss Is Not Always Dementia. A Neurologist Explains

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Forgetting information can cause anxiety, but it doesn't always indicate neurological issues. It's ...

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Forgetting names, misplacing keys or missing turns while driving can understandably provoke anxiety about potential serious neurological

problems. It's essential to address these concerns proactively and seek professional guidance when needed.

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Patients frequently raise concerns about memory loss with their healthcare providers, fearing it may indicate dementia. It's important to remember that we're all human, and a certain level of forgetfulness is completely normal. But sometimes it can be difficult to differentiate what is normal from abnormal, especially when you're the one going through it.

## The Basics Of Memory

To effectively remember information, it's essential to first engage with it actively. This means focusing your attention fully on what you are learning. In our fast-paced world, many people tend to multitask, which can make it challenging to absorb important information. To enhance your memory, begin by concentrating on one task at a time. During meetings, for instance, focus entirely on the speaker. To minimize distractions, consider silencing your mobile phone or other devices.

If you struggle with attention due to an underlying condition like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, it's beneficial to seek support from a qualified medical professional. You might be offered a behavioral intervention or medication to help with your attention.

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By making these intentional changes, you can significantly improve your ability to remember important information.

Ensure you're getting a good night's sleep, as sleep plays a crucial role in your memory. When you don't sleep well and feel drowsy or unfocused during the day, it can be challenging to pay attention and retain new information. Additionally, if you are trying to remember long-term information, a good night's sleep is vital to reinforce learning. [Research](#) indicates sufficient sleep facilitates learning new information effectively.

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This can pose a challenge for individuals with sleep disorders, like insomnia and sleep apnea, as well as those who have long commutes. People with long commutes should try to be more efficient at home, look into the possibility of a flexible work schedule or even do some work from home if permissible.



Anyone with difficulty hearing should have an evaluation by an audiologist. If prescribed a hearing ...

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If you are experiencing hearing loss, it's important to get evaluated by an expert — do not delay getting a hearing aid. If you already have one, make sure you wear it. Some individuals avoid wearing hearing aids because they don't like the way they look, while others may feel overwhelmed by background noise coming in through the hearing aid. Some people simply cannot afford hearing aids, as they are expensive. If you are a veteran of the U.S. armed forces, check with the Veteran's Administration to see if you can obtain hearing aids for free.

Numerous studies have shown a link between not wearing hearing aids and the progression of dementia in people with hearing loss. While causation has not been definitively established, it is believed that difficulty hearing can lead to increased social withdrawal, as individuals may struggle to engage fully in conversations. If you cannot hear what is being said, you will not be able to remember it.

## **Tips to Avoid Dementia**

Here are some key tips to help care for your brain and potentially delay the onset of dementia:

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- **Embrace a healthy diet:** A nutritious diet is vital for your overall health and well-being. Adopting the [MIND or Mediterranean](#) diet can reduce the presence of plaque and tangles in the brain—key findings in Alzheimer’s disease. The Mediterranean diet is rich in vegetables and fruits and encourages eating fish three or more times a week. Meanwhile, the MIND diet focuses on green leafy vegetables like spinach, kale and collard greens, as well as other vegetables. It also favors berries over other fruits and recommends at least one serving of fish weekly. If you're unsure about how to incorporate these foods into your meals, consider connecting with a nutritionist or dietitian for personalized guidance and support. Many physicians can also steer you toward healthier dietary choices. Prioritizing your diet today can have lasting benefits for your brain health tomorrow.
- **Exercise regularly:** Regular exercise is beneficial for both physical and cognitive health. It should include a mix of weight training and aerobic activities. Simple exercises, such as walking or riding a stationary bike, can have a positive impact. For those who may find it challenging to walk or bike safely, using a pedal device like a stride cycle is an excellent alternative. This device allows you to pedal while sitting in a chair, making it easier to stay active while prioritizing safety and preventing falls.
- **Get a good night's sleep:** Quality sleep is essential not only for feeling rested but also for removing toxins that may contribute to dementia. These toxins are eliminated from the brain during deeper stages of sleep. Chronic sleep deprivation can lead to the unhealthy accumulation of these toxins.
- **Limit or eliminate alcohol use:** It’s important to understand that alcohol can negatively affect memory in various ways. It disrupts

sleep, making it harder to learn new things, and it can also harm the brain cells that are essential for memory retention.

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- **Socialize:** Embrace social interaction as a [powerful tool](#) for enhancing brain health. Spend time with family and friends, engage in uplifting conversations and offer support to others. Each moment you invest in stimulating your brain is invaluable. Seize the opportunity to connect with those around you. The connections you forge will strengthen your support system on your journey toward better brain health while also cultivating resilience.
- **Engage in music and the arts:** Listening to music and engaging in the arts stimulates various brain centers simultaneously and can be [highly activating](#). Music and the arts strengthen connections between brain areas and can enhance your memory.
- **Address medical conditions:** Issues like depression and anxiety can significantly affect your memory. Mindfulness can help with addressing some of the depression and anxiety and may also help limit the negative impact of your various psychosocial stressors. Additionally, if you have been diagnosed with high blood pressure, it is crucial to maintain it within the recommended range. Failure to control your blood pressure can adversely impact your brain health. It is important to tackle these concerns for overall brain wellness. If you are having difficulty taking your prescribed medications, talk to your healthcare providers. They may be able to suggest alternative treatments, including different medications. Skipping your medication can lead to a worsening of your underlying medical condition, which may further impair your memory.

While following these guidelines may not fully prevent dementia, they can work wonders in improving your overall brain and physical health. It is important to follow closely with medical professionals who will have a better understanding of your personal situation. They may provide more detailed

guidance on what you can do to preserve your cognition as you age. Boosting memory is a reasonable goal and following some of the simple science-based approaches like exercise, mindfulness and dietary adjustments can help keep your brain sharp in the years to come.

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