

Signs and Symptoms of Serious Memory Loss

It's true that some of us get more forgetful as we age. It may take longer to learn new things, remember familiar names and words, or find our glasses. Typically, these things are not indicative of serious memory problems. Signs of serious memory problems may include:

- Asking the same questions over and over again
- Rapid mood changes
- Not being able to follow simple directions
- Getting very confused about time, people, and places
- Neglecting personal care or a general loss in initiative
- Unsafe behavior or poor judgment

Causes of Memory Problems

Memory loss is typically either caused by a medical condition, emotional problem, Alzheimer's disease, or multi-infarct dementia:

- *Medical conditions* include negative reactions to certain medications, dehydration, minor head injuries, or even thyroid problems. These medical conditions are serious and should be treated by a physician.
- *Emotional problems*, such as depression, may also contribute to memory loss. Being active, spending more time with family and friends, and learning new skills can help. In some cases, seeing a physician or counselor for treatment may be necessary.
- *Alzheimer's disease* signs and symptoms begin slowly and get worse over time. This is due to nerve cell changes in the brain that cause large numbers of brain cells to die. It may seem like simple forgetfulness at first, but over time people with Alzheimer's disease have trouble completing everyday tasks such as personal care, cooking, having conversations, etc. As the illness gets worse, people may require assistance with their daily activities.
- *Multi-infarct dementia* may appear suddenly. This is because the memory loss and confusion are caused by small changes in the blood supply to the brain. Monitoring and regulating high blood pressure can lower your chances of getting this illness.

What Should I Do If I'm Worried About Memory Loss?

See a physician if you suspect that a serious memory problem exists. A complete physical exam and diagnostic testing may be needed to fully assess the situation. Once the physician finds out what is causing the memory problems, they can recommend a specific treatment.