

Forgetfulness: Normal or Not?



Dementia is more common as people grow older (around one-third of those 85+ may have some form of dementia), but it is not a normal part of aging. Dementia includes the loss of cognitive functioning — thinking, remembering, learning, and reasoning — and behavioral abilities to the extent that it interferes with a person's quality of life and activities. Memory loss, though common, is not the only sign of dementia.

While it's normal to forget things once in a while as we age, serious memory problems make it hard to do everyday things, such as driving, using the phone, and finding your way home. People with dementia may have problems with language skills, visual perception, or paying attention. Some people with dementia also have personality changes.

Though there are different forms of dementia, Alzheimer's disease is the most common form in people over age 65. The chart below explains some differences between normal signs of aging and Alzheimer's.

Normal Aging	Alzheimer's Disease
Making a bad decision occasionally	Making poor judgments and decisions a lot of the time
Missing a monthly payment	Problems taking care of monthly bills
Forgetting which day it is and remembering it later	Losing track of the date or time of year
Sometimes forgetting which word to use	Trouble having a conversation
Losing things from time to time	Misplacing things often and being unable to find them

If you have changes in memory or thinking that concern you, talk with your healthcare provider. Memory and other thinking problems have many possible causes, including depression, an infection, or medication side effects. Finding the cause of the problems is important for determining the best course of action. Once you know the cause, you and your provider can make the right treatment plan.

Source: National Institute on Aging ([nia.nih.gov](https://www.nia.nih.gov))