

## 1 What is cognitive aging? What steps can I take now to protect my brain and cognitive health?

Cognitive aging, or brain aging, is a natural part of the aging process and may include some changes in the ability to think, learn and remember.

## 2 What is brain span?

Unlike lifespan which refers to the number of years a person lives, brain span focuses on the quality of brain function throughout a person's life. Maximizing the quality of brain function throughout a person's lifespan is an important part maintaining quality of life.

## 3 Is it normal for my memory to change as I get older?

Yes. What many people may not know is that age-related memory loss, which is usually associated with mild forgetfulness, is part of normal aging and not necessarily a sign of a serious memory problem.

## 4 Is there anything I can do to preserve my memory?

There are many things that contribute to preserving brain health, including:

- Eating healthy foods
- Managing high blood pressure
- Taking care of your physical health
- Being physically active
- Keeping your mind active
- Managing stress
- Staying connected

## 5 What can I expect as I age in terms of brain health?

People can expect some changes in their ability to think, learn, and remember. This is a normal part of brain aging and not necessarily a sign of a serious memory problem. While changes are normal there are things people can do to help preserve brain health like physical exercise, managing stress, and staying connected to others.

## 6 Where can I get more information about cognitive aging and brain health?

Understanding your brain and how it will change as you age is an important step in your brain health journey. Visit our [Brain Works resource hub](#) to learn more about your brain health.

## 7 What can I do to keep my brain healthy and reduce the risk of cognitive decline?

While age-related changes to brain health are normal, there is growing evidence that various lifestyle modifications may help protect brain health now and in the future. These actions may include eating a healthy diet, participating in physical activity, and maintaining connections through social interaction.

**8 What percentage of Americans over age 65 have Alzheimer’s disease or dementia?**

Less than 11% of Americans over the age of 65 are living with these conditions (Alzheimer’s Association Facts & Figures 2023 report).

**9 Should I discuss the topic of brain health/brain aging with my primary care provider?**

Yes, starting a conversation with your primary care provider is a great way to be proactive about brain health, and it’s never too early to start. Whether there have been changes in your memory recently or you are curious about what to expect as you age, talking to a health care professional is a great place to start. For advice on how to start the conversation [check out our resource](#).

**10 At what age should I start paying attention to my brain health?**

Just like paying attention to your heart health, you can never be too young to start paying attention to your brain health. In fact, the brain changes associated with aging are part of a natural process that starts at birth and continues throughout the lifespan. Things like eating a healthy diet, participating in physical activity, and staying socially connected are all lifestyle factors that positively impact brain health at all stages of life.

**11 Should I be concerned about being affected by age-related memory loss and a decline in brain function as I grow older?**

The brain changes associated with aging are part of a natural process that starts at birth and continues throughout the lifespan. While things like our wisdom, expertise and vocabulary increase with age, other abilities like processing speed, decision-making and some types of memory may decline with age. This is a normal part of aging and should not be a concern.

**12 How do I know whether I am experiencing normal age-related memory loss or cognitive decline and/or Alzheimer’s disease or dementia?**

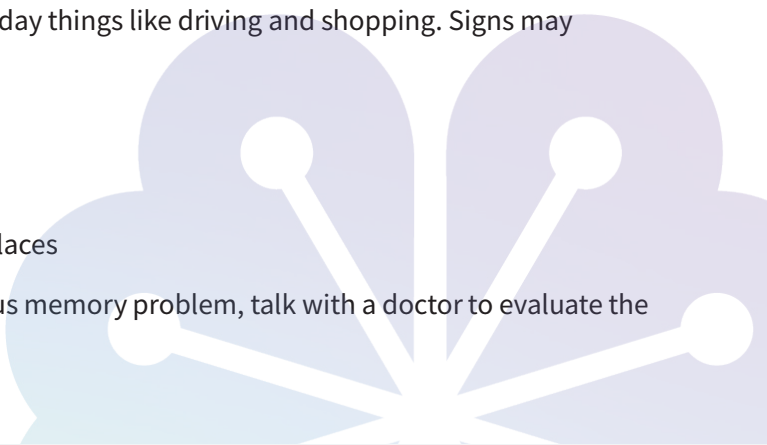
Most people do not understand that age-related memory loss is usually associated with mild forgetfulness and is a normal part of brain aging and not necessarily a sign of a serious memory problem. Some signs of normal aging include:

- Making a bad decision once in a while
- Missing a monthly payment
- Losing track of time
- Not being able to find the right words
- Losing things around the house

Serious memory problems make it hard to do everyday things like driving and shopping. Signs may include:

- Asking the same questions repeatedly
- Getting lost in familiar places
- Inability to follow instructions or directions
- Becoming confused about time, people, and places

If you or a loved one is experiencing signs of a serious memory problem, talk with a doctor to evaluate the issues and to find out what may be causing them.



**13 Are there any recent scientific breakthroughs in maintaining brain health and cognition with age?**

The McKnight Brain Research Foundation is a leader in promoting research in brain and cognitive health. There are many studies underway on this topic and we recommend staying up to date by [visiting here](#).

**14 I know that a healthy diet and exercise can help protect brain health, but what other things can I do to help?**

Adopting a combination of healthy behaviors, which have also been shown to reduce cancer, diabetes, and heart disease will also help you protect your brain health. In addition to diet and exercise, consider the following:

- Staying socially and intellectually engaged
- Quitting smoking
- Getting 7-8 hours of sleep per night as recommended
- Managing your blood pressure, weight, and cholesterol levels to reduce and manage your risk for cardiovascular disease
- Talking with your doctor about your health conditions and the medications and supplements you take as that may impact your cognitive health

