



Mild Cognitive Impairment

What is it?

Mild cognitive impairment is memory loss that is not a normal part of ageing. It affects up to 20% of people aged 65 years or older. You may notice your mind isn't as sharp as it used to be. People who are close to you may notice this, too. Mood changes are also common.

Mild cognitive impairment can be caused by many factors, such as infection and medication side effects. In some cases it may resolve by itself. Your GP will work with you to make a plan.

Around 10-15% of people will go on to have dementia. There is no cure for dementia, but there are healthy lifestyle changes that can help support your brain health as you age. Your GP can talk to you about these changes and your options.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP may assess your health and try to find the cause of your symptoms. They may aim to exclude any other issues. Some medications and side effects can make brain function worse. Your GP may review what you are taking and suggest other options. Your GP may also arrange tests to check your brain function.

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP may want to see you every six to 12 months to check your health and symptoms. If your symptoms are not getting any better, or if you get more symptoms, your GP may suggest tests or refer you to a specialist. If you are worried about your brain health, you can always see your GP earlier.

Your GP may also talk to you about [dementia](#) and [advance care planning](#).

What can I do?

Living a healthy lifestyle will help you to keep your brain healthy. One of the best things you can do is to work out at least twice a week. Looking after your health as you age is vital. Some things you can do include:

- Eat a healthy diet
- Limit drinking and quit smoking
- Stay social, and see people close to you
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Get eight hours of sleep each night
- Reduce stress
- Train your brain with puzzles and quizzes, or by learning a new skill (like a language or an instrument)
- Have check-ups with your GP
- Keep your blood pressure within the normal range

Common Symptoms

Forgetting things more often than usual

Losing your train of thought

Feeling overwhelmed by making decisions

Struggling to follow instructions

Feeling confused in familiar places

Being more impulsive than you normally are

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What supports are available?

South Western Sydney has a range of aged care supports to help you.

Aged Care Assessment Team

The team provides support for people with complex needs aged over 65 years. Phone **1800 200 422** or visit myagedcare.gov.au

Commonwealth Home Support Program

This program offers support for older people who need help to live in their homes. Speak to your GP about how to join.

Private specialists

Your GP can refer you to a private specialist. These specialists are called geriatricians.

Specialist Aged Care Team

This team provides health care for people aged over 65. Phone **1800 200 422**.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- How can I maintain my brain function?*
- What medicine(s) do I need to stop taking?*
- Will I develop dementia?*
- What might be causing my cognitive impairment?*
- Am I at risk of any other complications?*
- How much exercise should I do every day?*

Where can I learn more?

- **Better Health Channel** – Dementia Safety Issues: betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- **Dementia Australia** – Mild Cognitive Impairment: dementia.org.au
- **Dementia Care International**: dementiacareinternational.com
- **Dementia Collaborative Research Centre** – A Guide for Family Carers: Dealing with Behaviours in People with Dementia: dementiaresearch.org.au
- **Dementia Support Australia**: dementia.com.au
- **TEDGlobal** – How I'm Preparing to Get Alzheimer's: ted.com

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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