



Alzheimer's Disease & Dementia vs. Normal Memory Changes

1-800-540-4442 <http://www.usc.edu/lacrc>

This guide will help you understand the **differences** between **Alzheimer's Disease, dementia, and normal memory changes**.

Normal memory changes	Every one experiences some memory changes with age. These changes are NORMAL!	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Slower thinking. ▪ Difficulty paying attention. ▪ Need more cues - like words, pictures, smell, etc. - to recall information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People use fewer memorization skills like visualization and organization. ▪ Associations are more difficult. ▪ Decline in vision and hearing.

Causes of normal memory changes	Common causes of memory change		What you can control
	Health related	Lifestyle related	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High blood pressure ▪ Prescription drugs ▪ Bad nutrition ▪ Low Blood Sugar ▪ Depression ▪ Anxiety ▪ Taking several prescriptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of sleep ▪ Too much sleep ▪ Lack of activity ▪ Stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anxiety ▪ Tiredness ▪ Stress/depression ▪ Inactivity of mind/body ▪ Illness ▪ Physical problems (vision/hearing loss) ▪ Overuse of alcohol/drugs 	

Improving	Internal tips	External tips
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your memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve Your Attitude ▪ Stop worrying about memory, RELAX ▪ Be selective -you don't need to remember everything ▪ Really pay attention ▪ Give yourself time to remember ▪ Try to make associations, the more connections, the better the memory sticks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduce noise ▪ Keep distractions to a minimum ▪ Set up a system of remembering ▪ Keep a calendar with you ▪ Write notes to yourself ▪ Keep a list by the door ▪ Quit smoking
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➔ If you remember that you forgot, then you are doing FINE! ➔

Top 10 memory savers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Control your blood pressure 2. Get enough sleep 3. Manage your stress 4. Keep medications to a minimum 5. Eat a balanced diet 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Keep mentally fit – learn something new! 7. Use alcohol in moderation 8. Have your eyes and glasses checked 9. Have your hearing aids checked 10. Keep your heart healthy- exercise!
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Normal vs. abnormal memory changes		Normal	Abnormal
	<i>Forgetting</i>	Forgetting part of an experience	Forgetting an entire experience
	<i>Following instructions</i>	Able to follow directions	Unable to follow directions
	<i>Using notes</i>	Using notes and a calendar	Unable to use these items
	<i>Caring for self</i>	Able to care for self (even with memory lapses)	Unable to care for self (eating, bathing, dressing etc.)

What is dementia?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dementia is a loss of mental abilities that causes problems with daily activities. ▪ Dementia is not a specific disease. It describes symptoms of certain diseases like Alzheimer's disease. ▪ Dementia is <i>not a normal</i> part of getting older.
What is Alzheimer's disease?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A continuous shrinking of brain tissue. ▪ Causes problems with: memory, thinking, reasoning, and judgment skills. It can cause changes in behavior and personality. ▪ Strongest risk factors are age and family history. ▪ Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most common form of dementia.

Causes of	Reversible	Not Reversible
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dementia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reactions to medications ▪ Painful emotions ▪ Difficulty seeing (vision problems) ▪ Difficulty hearing ▪ Nutritional deficiencies ▪ Infections ▪ Brain tumors ▪ Hardening of the arteries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brain injury ▪ Diseases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most common is Alzheimer’s disease • Parkinson’s disease • Huntington’s disease • Pick’s disease • Stroke • AIDS • Multiple Sclerosis • Creutzfeldt-Jakob’s disease
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Causes of Alzheimer’s disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build up of protein plaque and tangled nerve cells in the brain. ▪ Scientists are unsure what causes this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alzheimer’s disease is not reversible.
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Symptoms of dementia & Alzheimer’s disease	Dementia	Alzheimer’s disease
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Short-term memory loss. ▪ Inability to think problems through. ▪ Difficulty completing complex tasks without step-by-step instructions. ▪ Confusion. ▪ Difficulty concentrating. ▪ Changes in personality and behavior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recent memory loss that affects jobs performance. ▪ Difficulty performing familiar tasks. ▪ Problems with language. ▪ Problems understanding time and place. ▪ Loss of motivation. ▪ Problems with abstract thinking. ▪ Misplacing things. ▪ Changes in personality. ▪ Poor or decreased judgment. ▪ Changes in mood or behavior.

Diagnosing dementia & Alzheimer’s disease	Dementia	Alzheimer’s disease
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete medical evaluation ▪ Complete mental evaluation. ▪ Brain scan or MRI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete medical and mental evaluation to <i>rule out other possible causes of dementia.</i> ▪ Only diagnosis that is 100% accurate is brain autopsy after death.

Stages of	Early	Middle	Late
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Alzheimer's disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trouble remembering events and conversations. ▪ Poor judgment. ▪ Disorientation in familiar surroundings. ▪ Withdrawal from social situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficult behaviors begin. ▪ Anger, suspicion, paranoia, wandering, violent behaviors, etc. ▪ Increased need for personal care. ▪ Requires 24-hour care. ▪ May not recognize family and friends. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inability to communicate. ▪ Loses ability to walk. ▪ Inability to recognize people, places and objects. ▪ Seizures may happen. ▪ Weight loss due to inability to swallow. ▪ Loses control of bladder and bowels.
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Helping those with memory problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Informal care ▪ Information and referral ▪ Case management ▪ Adult day care ▪ Home care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respite care ▪ Hospice ▪ Support groups ▪ Assisted living facilities ▪ Skilled nursing facilities
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The LACRC quick guide “**Help for Caregivers**” describes these services in detail. Call (213) 740-1376 to order.

Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral Center

A service of the National Institute on Aging
(800) 438-4380.

Alzheimer's Disease Research Center

Provides outreach services through a education and information services to the families of AD
(213)-740-7777

Alzheimer's Association, Los Angeles

Dedicated to researching the prevention, cure and treatment of Alzheimer's disease and related disorders and to providing support and assistance to afflicted patients and their families.
(800)-660-1993

Eldercare Locator

Information on services and programs in your area.
(800) 677-1116

<p>Los Angeles Caregiver Resource Center: Central LA (213) 740-1376 Southeast LA (562) 469-6255</p>	<p>http://www.usc.edu/lacrc San Gabriel Valley (626) 814-3334 Antelope & Santa Clarita Valley (661) 945-4852</p>
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