

# Mild Cognitive Impairment Isolated Memory Impairment



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**Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)**, also called **Isolated Memory Impairment (IMI)**, is a memory disorder. A person with MCI experiences greater memory problems than expected with aging, but thinking problems do not impair their judgment or their ability to do daily activities (as they do in diseases causing dementia). It is important to recognize MCI because it puts a person at a much greater risk of developing dementia in the future.

## CAUSE

MCI has several potential causes. Sometimes MCI is the earliest symptom of Alzheimer's disease. It can also be caused by other disorders. Often the cause becomes apparent over time.

## SYMPTOMS

People with MCI have significant memory impairment. While smaller memory lapses are common, people with MCI are likely to forget important events repeatedly. This memory loss is usually very

noticeable to family and friends, and often to the person with MCI. Even though persons with MCI are forgetful, they are able to continue doing all their usual activities around their home and community.

## DIAGNOSIS

A diagnosis of MCI is usually made after a thorough medical examination and neuropsychological testing (a detailed assessment of memory and thinking abilities). Brain scans and blood tests are often performed. A diagnosis is generally made on the basis of four criteria:

- an individual's report of his/her own memory problems, or reported by a family member or close friend;
- measurable, greater than normal impairment detected by standard memory tests;
- normal general thinking and reasoning skills; and
- ability to perform normal daily activities.

## PROGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

Over time, persons with MCI may worsen and have difficulties with their usual activities that indicate they have developed dementia. However, others with MCI do not decline significantly, even after several years of memory loss. Unfortunately, there are few treatments available for MCI. An evaluation may identify conditions that are contributing to symptoms and require specific treatment. Researchers are in the process of testing several new treatments for MCI. Some physicians may prescribe a cholinesterase inhibitor drug used to treat Alzheimer's disease (trade names Aricept, Exelon, or Reminyl).

## RESOURCES

More information about MCI can be found at:  
[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)  
[www.alzheimers.org](http://www.alzheimers.org)