



Memory Screenings

A Publication of the Alzheimer's Foundation for Caregiving In Canada Inc.

Why are Memory Screenings Important?

- ♥ Memory screenings are the first step toward finding out if you have a type of condition that is causing memory loss, a related dementia, Alzheimer's disease (AD), or pre-AD related conditions.
- ♥ Memory screenings can also let you know that you are okay. The screenings could turn out normal and put your fears to rest.
- ♥ The results of the memory screening do not represent a diagnosis of any particular illness, and a screening does not replace consultation with a qualified healthcare professional. However, it is very helpful. A screening can test your memory and other intellectual functions. It can indicate whether you might benefit from more testing.
- ♥ It is very important to identify the problem or disease that is causing memory loss. That is why you should follow up with a complete checkup by a qualified healthcare professional.
- ♥ Memory can be affected by a number of factors, ranging from stress and lack of sleep, to such illnesses as Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia.
- ♥ Some conditions that cause memory loss, such as vitamin deficiencies, depression or thyroid problems, are reversible. In general, the earlier the diagnosis, the easier it is to treat one of these conditions.

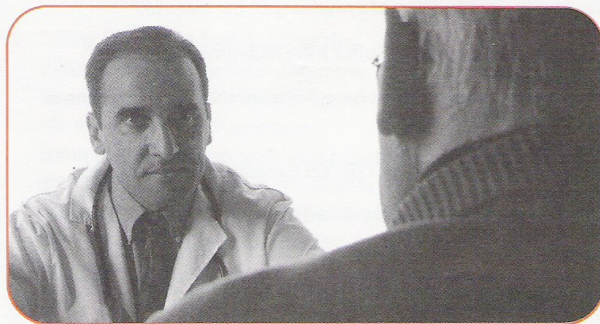
"National Memory Screening will catapult memory issues into the public eye. Canadians need to feel comfortable talking about memory concerns - and, most importantly, acting on them. The earlier we attend to memory problems, the better, in terms of quality of life"

Taras W. Rohatyn, President, AFCC

- ♥ Early recognitions of Age Associated Memory Impairment (AAMI) or mild cognitive impairment (MCI)— mild intellectual loss that may develop into dementia— provides an opportunity for healthcare professionals to treat this condition and possibly slow the decline in memory and other functions.
- ♥ For irreversible illnesses, such as Alzheimer's disease, early diagnosis could improve your future health. Although there currently is no cure for Alzheimer's disease, available and emerging medical treatments may slow the progression of symptoms. These medications have been proven to work best the earlier they are given.
- ♥ For persons with a normal score, memory screenings provide a valuable opportunity to establish a baseline score for future comparison.

Facts about Memory Screenings

- ♥ Various types of healthcare professionals provide memory screenings, including physicians, psychiatrists, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, pharmacists and dementia care administrators.



- ♥ A memory screening is a simple and safe evaluation tool that takes about five to 10 minutes to administer. It consists of a series of questions and/or tasks designed to test memory, language skills, thinking ability and other intellectual functions.
- ♥ The results of the memory screening do not represent a diagnosis.
- ♥ The person who gives you the screening will review the results with you. Individuals with an abnormal score or those with a normal score but who still have concerns should follow up with a qualified healthcare professional for more testing.
- ♥ Results of the memory screenings are confidential. Ask for a copy of the screening results to bring to your healthcare professional.

Twelve Warning Signs of Dementia

- 1 Trouble with new memories
- 2 Relying on memory helpers
- 3 Trouble finding words
- 4 Struggling to complete familiar actions
- 5 Confusion about time, place or people
- 6 Misplacing familiar objects
- 7 Onset of new depression or irritability
- 8 Making bad decisions
- 9 Personality changes
- 10 Loss of interest in important responsibilities
- 11 Seeing or hearing things
- 12 Expressing false beliefs



Who Should Be Screened?

Screenings make sense for anyone concerned about memory loss, whose family and friends have noticed changes in them, or who believe they are at risk due to a family history of Alzheimer's disease (AD) or a related dementia or conditions that are considered pre-AD.

These questions might help you decide. If you answer "yes" to any of them, you might benefit from a memory screening.

- ♥ Am I becoming more forgetful?
- ♥ Do I have trouble concentrating?
- ♥ Do I have difficulty performing familiar tasks?
- ♥ Do I have trouble recalling words or names in conversation?
- ♥ Do I sometimes forget where I am?
- ♥ Am I misplacing things more often?
- ♥ Have family or friends told me that I am repeating questions or saying the same thing over and over again?
- ♥ Have I become lost when walking or driving in a familiar neighborhood?
- ♥ Have my family or friends noticed changes in my mood, behavior, personality or desire to do things?

69.1%

of respondents in the National Memory Screening Day survey self-reported memory concerns, but only 12.34% had discussed them with their health care provider

Source:
AFCC NMSD Screening Survey
(2008)

Facts about Alzheimer's Disease

- ♥ Alzheimer's disease is an irreversible disorder of the brain caused by the death or permanent dysfunction of brain cells (neurons). The disease robs individuals of memory and, eventually, overall mental and physical function. It is not a normal part of the aging process.
- ♥ Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia—a term that describes loss of intellectual function due to the death of brain cells. Other common types of dementia include vascular dementia, Huntington's disease, dementia with Lewy bodies, dementia associated with Parkinson disease, and alcohol-induced dementia.
- ♥ The causes of Alzheimer's disease are unknown, and there are no specific treatments that prevent the death of brain cells or cure the disease. But several medications are available that may help slow the progression of symptoms of the disease.
- ♥ It is estimated that nearly 300,000 Canadians suffer from Alzheimer's disease
- ♥ About 60% of people in long term care facilities have Alzheimer's disease and one in five with Parkinson's disease will develop it
- ♥ It is estimated that by 2031, there will be over 778,000 Canadians with dementia
- ♥ The annual net economic cost of dementia is predicted to escalate to over \$12 billion by 2031
- ♥ Alzheimer's disease is ranked 5th for women and 8th for men as the leading cause of death in Canadians 65 years of age or older

Ask Your Healthcare Professional

Good communication can maximize your visit to a physician or other healthcare professional as a follow up to a memory screening or due to other memory concerns. Being open and asking questions help toward proper diagnosis and treatment. Bring your current medications, notes on symptoms and other issues — and a list of questions. Ask:

- ♥ What is my diagnosis?
- ♥ What other tests should I take?
- ♥ Should I see a neurologist, geriatrician or other specialist?
- ♥ How does a memory issue or disease progress (symptoms, time span)?
- ♥ What are all the available treatments?
- ♥ Are there various methods to administer these drugs?
- ♥ What is the effectiveness of each medication, in terms of memory, behavior and other symptoms?
- ♥ What are the side effects, dosage, possible drug interactions and pros and cons of each treatment?
- ♥ What changes in condition should I report to you?
- ♥ Besides medication, what do you recommend in terms of diet, vitamins, physical exercise and other lifestyle changes?
- ♥ What mental exercises can I do to stimulate my brain?
- ♥ Are there clinical drug trials that would be appropriate for me to participate in? What are the risks and benefits?
- ♥ What advice can you give regarding care?
- ♥ Do you have information about community resources, such as support groups, educational workshops and services for my family?
- ♥ Will you be speaking with my other healthcare professionals?
- ♥ How often should I see you?

90%

The only definite way to diagnose Alzheimer's disease is an autopsy at death. However, clinicians can diagnose Alzheimer's disease correctly up to 90% of the time. Obtaining a proper diagnosis involves consulting with a healthcare professional expert in dementia, communicating symptoms and undergoing extensive testing. Tools to diagnose "probable" Alzheimer's disease include a complete medical history; blood, urine or other medical tests; neuropsychological tests that measure memory, problem solving, attention and language; and brain scans.

Planning Issues to Address

Early diagnosis of pre AD conditions, Alzheimer's disease (AD) or other dementia is critical. It allows individuals and their families to learn more and plan better for the future, and it can improve quality of life. Consider:

- ♥ Discussing the condition or the disease, its symptoms, the way it progresses and the range of treatment options with qualified healthcare professionals.
- ♥ Telling family and friends about the diagnosis, educating them about the disease and asking for family support. Identifying and participating in community resources, such as support groups, adult day services and respite programs at local Alzheimer's organizations or other community agencies.
- ♥ Participating in clinical trials.
- ♥ Seeking support services for primary caregivers and other family members, including support groups, telephone buddies and respite care.
- ♥ Preparing advance directives, such as a living will and power of attorney.
- ♥ Planning for the future with regard to treatment choices, legal issues, financial matters, long-term care and end-of-life wishes while the individual is still able to make decisions.
- ♥ Reviewing insurance coverage, including health, disability, life, prescription drug and long-term care.
- ♥ Addressing issues such as safety, wandering, motor vehicle driving and living arrangements.
- ♥ Checking out long-term care options, including in-home care, assisted living facilities and nursing homes.
- ♥ Protecting the individual with the disease from physical, emotional or financial abuse.

Your Rights

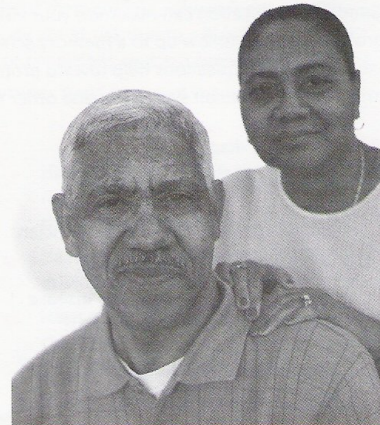
- ♥ Consumers have the right to demand proper evaluation of memory disorders by a healthcare professional.
- ♥ Persons with dementia are entitled to care from professionals who understand basic treatment strategies for cognitive wellness.


Keys to Successful Aging

The key to successful aging is a healthy, common sense lifestyle. The goals are to slow or prevent the loss of brain cells, maintain the brain's capacity to make up for any loss and let remaining brain cells function well. This requires a healthy body, mind and spirit. Here are some tips for successful aging:


- ♥ Visit your doctor or other healthcare professional regularly.
- ♥ Participate in activities that stimulate your brain, such as reading, crossword puzzles, playing bridge and other mental exercises.
- ♥ Manage stress through techniques such as relaxation, meditation and yoga.
- ♥ Treat depression. Depressed elders have higher rates of dementia, lower quality of life and higher rates of death.
- ♥ Be social. Maintaining a network of friends will lessen the likelihood of isolation and depression while increasing the overall level of brain stimulation.
- ♥ Exercise daily, such as walking 30 minutes per day. Physical activity significantly lessens the chance of cardiovascular complications that could cause dementia.
- ♥ Control hypertension, diabetes and heart disease—risk factors for dementia—through physical exercise, quitting smoking, controlling blood pressure, lowering cholesterol and avoiding obesity.
- ♥ Follow a healthy diet and take vitamins, as discussed with your clinician. Limit alcohol consumption. Alcohol has a direct toxic effect on the brain that adds to the loss of brain cells and synapses.

Reach Out for Care...



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 Alzheimer's Foundation
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**National Memory
Screening Day®**