

13 Treatable Causes of Memory Loss

FACT SHEET

Many older adults suffer memory loss, but never receive proper medical attention because of the belief that it is a normal part of the aging process. More than 70 medical conditions have symptoms that mimic Alzheimer's disease and may cause memory problems. Below are a few of the more common conditions that are considered treatable. Early diagnosis and treatment could improve memory.

1. **Poor Nutrition:** Body chemistry can become imbalanced from the “tea and toast” syndrome, eating meals lacking the full range of necessary nutrients.
2. **Dehydration:** Many people do not drink enough fluids, or they consume primarily caffeinated beverages, which flush fluids out of the body.
3. **Fluctuation in Blood Sugar:** People who develop diabetes late in life may go for years without realizing they should ask their physician to check their blood sugar.
4. **Thyroid Deficiency:** Possible thyroid deficiency can be checked by a physician and remedied with medication.
5. **Infection:** Urinary tract or bladder infections are the most common infection, but any infection can cause memory loss.
6. **Medication Combinations:** Taking multiple pills every day can result in mix-ups or medication interactions.
7. **Medication Toxicity:** Occasionally, too much medication accumulates in the blood. For example, Digoxin (Lanoxin) is a heart medication, which can become toxic.
8. **Depression:** Some people lose interest in others and become confused when they get depressed. Antidepressant medication may help significantly.
9. **Sensory Losses:** Loss of hearing or sight may interfere with orientation to time and place.
10. **Lung Disease:** Decreased lung capacity may mean insufficient oxygen to the brain. Memory loss may completely resolve when the person receives oxygen treatments.
11. **Cancer:** Tumors in the brain, liver, or other organs can lead to memory loss. Prompt diagnosis may mean that the tumor can be removed or reduced through treatment.
12. **Sleep Apnea:** Impaired breathing while sleeping may mean insufficient oxygen to the brain. Memory loss may completely resolve when sleep apnea is properly treated.
13. **Toxic House:** Furnaces sometimes malfunction and leave carbon monoxide in the air, producing confusion and sleepiness. Fixing the furnace may restore alertness. Installing carbon monoxide detectors can alert to future leaks.