

Have You Noticed Changes in Your Memory?

Take Your First Steps Towards Better Brain Health Today!



What is Age Related Change in the Brain?

Every brain changes with age, and mental function changes along with it. Mental decline is common, and it is one of the most feared consequences of aging. But cognitive impairment is not inevitable.

Normal aging may mean slower processing speeds and more difficulty with multitasking, but routine memory, skills, and knowledge are stable and may even improve with age. It is normal to occasionally forget recent events such as where the keys were last placed or the name of the person you just met.

What is Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)?

The Mayo Clinic describes Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) as the stage between the expected cognitive decline of normal aging and the more serious decline of dementia. It can involve problems with memory, language, thinking and judgment that are greater than normal age-related changes.

If you have mild cognitive impairment, you may be aware that your memory or mental function has "slipped." Your family and close friends also may notice a change. But these changes aren't severe enough to significantly interfere with your daily life and usual activities.

Mild cognitive impairment may increase your risk of later developing dementia caused by Alzheimer's disease or other neurological conditions. But some people with mild cognitive impairment never get worse, and a few eventually get better.

Symptoms of MCI

Your brain, like the rest of your body, changes as you grow older. Many people notice gradually increasing forgetfulness as they age. It may take longer to think of a word or to recall a person's name.

But consistent or increasing concern about your mental performance may suggest mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or simply fear of losing your memory.

Cognitive issues may go beyond normal age-related change and indicate possible MCI if you experience any or all of the following:

- You forget things more often.

- You forget important events such as appointments or social engagements.
- You lose your train of thought or the thread of conversations, books or movies.
- You feel increasingly overwhelmed by making decisions, planning steps to accomplish a task or understanding instructions.
- You start to have trouble finding your way around familiar environments.
- You become more impulsive or show increasingly poor judgment.
- Your family and friends notice any of these changes.

Causes

There is no single cause of mild cognitive impairment (MCI), just as there's no single outcome for the disorder. Symptoms of MCI may remain stable for years, progress to Alzheimer's disease or another type of dementia, or improve over time.

Treatment

Currently, no drugs or other treatments are approved specifically for mild cognitive impairment (MCI) by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). However, MCI is an active area of research and evidence informed recommendations. Clinical studies are underway better understand the disorder and find treatments that may improve symptoms or prevent or delay progression to dementia.

Reducing the Risks

According to the National Institute on Aging, there are certain behaviors that can reduce the risks of Mild Cognitive Impairment. Think Fit provides structure for activities that reduce the risks of cognitive decline. These activities include:

- Regular physical exercise
- Following the MIND diet
- Intellectual stimulation
- Social engagement
- Stress reduction
- Cognitive and memory training
- Education on important topics related to brain health such as nutrition, sleep apnea and anxiety or depression

The Think Fit Program Offers Evidence Informed Activities to Aid in Age Related Changes to the Brain and MCI

Think Fit links participants for 2-hour sessions 2 days per week of online activity and instruction, while also providing guidance on daily reinforcement to build brain health habits into your daily life. Each session includes fitness, a brain stimulating activity, education provided by expert speakers, a support group, and a mindfulness exercise.

How do I sign up?

In order to provide content that is based on group member's specific needs, you will complete a one-on-one virtual assessment with Think Fit Lead Hannah Hoffman. If video chatting is new for you, Hannah will guide you through the process of using Zoom. The assessment will consist of general information, your personal interests, and a short cognitive assessment. If the program is a good fit, we can move forward with creating a fee schedule and setting goals.

Sample Session Syllabus

Each session follows the same structure. The individual topics will change to ensure a thorough education, make sure each person can identify the techniques that work best for them, reduce boredom in the program and allow for input and interests from each participant.

10:00 Check-In: The leader will provide each person an opportunity to greet the group and provide a check in on how they are doing. This provides an opening to allow the group to explore issues or topics they want to discuss that day.

10:10 Exercise: Chair Yoga: Each session begins with a form of exercise to get the body moving and help prepare our bodies and minds to engage in the educational portion of the program. Yoga has been proven to reduce anxiety and stress and increase flexibility. Another day the exercise program may be the **Ageless Grace Exercise Program:** Ageless Grace is a cutting-edge brain fitness program based on neuroplasticity that activates all 5 functions of the brain - analytical, strategic, kinesthetic learning, memory/recall, creativity and imagination. The leader will facilitate this program and explain the benefits.

10:25 Expert Topic: Nutrition for Brain Health: Presented by a Registered Dietitian who will discuss the best diet and foods to promote brain health. She will include sample menus and a list of foods to avoid or limit. All handouts will be emailed for use at home. This portion of the program will focus on small and easy steps towards a healthier diet including the elements of the MIND diet. Another day the topic may be based on **The Montessori Approach to Memory Care:** Led by Licensed Clinical Social Worker Martha Shapiro. She will explain this evidenced based approach to managing memory loss. She will also teach the group how to implement cues in their environment to promote independent and reduce stress.

11:00 Memory Training: Each session will include a variety of activities to get you thinking, analyzing and firing the brain synapses. Some days this will include trivia that calls on the long-term memory recall. Other days this may include a group crossword puzzle. The activities are meant to be fun and challenging without being so difficult that they cause frustration. They are meant to grow the confidence and ability of the group.

11:20 Socialization: Process Group: Led by a Licensed Clinical Social Worker this time will allow each member of the group to share their feelings, worries and thoughts on memory loss and aging issues. It is open to discussion guided in a productive and gentle way by the facilitator.

11:45 Homework Assignments: The leader will review the topics of the day and provide specific tasks for each person to follow up on in between sessions. This may be related to the nutrition topic of the day or to concerns that were brought up in the process group. One example may be to practice a breathing exercise each evening or to create a meal plan to incorporate healthy foods for the brain.

11:55 Stress Reduction: Breathing Exercise: Every group will close with a relaxing and grounding breathing or short meditation exercise. These model good coping techniques for stress and anxiety that can be used in between programs at home. One breathing exercise will be the signal breath. The leader will explain why this is effective and will explain it in a step by step process. The group will then participate and do the signal breath together and rate their stress level both before and after the technique. A homework assignment may be to use this technique once a day and report back to the group on how the process felt.



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