



What is a Mild Cognitive Impairment?

Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) is a decline in thinking abilities that is greater than expected based on a person's age. However, the decline does not impair the person's ability to complete daily activities (compared to dementia, in which the decline interferes with daily activities). It is important to recognize MCI because it puts a person at a greater risk of developing dementia in the future.

What are the causes of a Mild Cognitive Impairment?

MCI has many potential causes, not all are completely understood. Experts believe that many cases (but not all) result from brain changes occurring in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease, or a similar disease.

What are the symptoms of a Mild Cognitive Impairment?

Experts classify MCI based on the type of thinking skills affected:

Amnestic MCI

Amnestic MCI affects memory. A person with Amnestic MCI may forget information that they would have previously recalled easily, such as:

- Appointments
- Conversations
- Recent events

Nonamnestic MCI

Nonamnestic MCI affects other thinking abilities, not memory. A person with nonamnestic MCI may have difficulty:

- Judging the time or sequence of steps needed to complete a complex task
- Making sense of visual information
- Finding or using words correctly

How is Mild Cognitive Impairment diagnosed?

MCI is diagnosed after a thorough evaluation that includes:

- A discussion of symptoms and ability to perform daily activities
- Testing of memory and other thinking abilities
- A physical exam

In addition, blood tests and brain imaging can be done to look for specific causes of MCI. Specialized tests, such as genetic or cerebrospinal fluid tests, may be performed to determine if the individual has MCI due to Alzheimer's disease.

What are the prognosis and options for treatment?

Over time, MCI can progress to dementia, but progression does not always occur. There are no medications proven to prevent progression. However, drugs used to treat Alzheimer's dementia may help some individuals with MCI.

Some studies suggest that the following may help slow decline:

- A healthy diet
- Exercise
- Participation in mentally stimulating and socially engaging activities

Where can I learn more?

More information about Mild Cognitive Impairment can be found at:

- The Alzheimer's Association
www.alz.org or by calling (800) 272-3900
- The National Institute on Aging
www.nia.nih.gov or by calling (800) 438-4380

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