



## ***Forget About Memory Loss: Take Action!***

### ***Imagine . . .***

- that you can't do the little things at work that had been second nature for you.
- Imagine not being able to handle your finances as accurately or as quickly as you had in the past.
- Imagine not wanting to fully participate in family settings because you simply can't keep up with the conversation.

These are some of the earliest signs of early memory loss.

As people age their memory changes but true memory loss is not inevitable and is not a normal part of aging.

There are many causes of memory loss; some are completely reversible; some are not.

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## **REVERSIBLE CAUSES OF MEMORY LOSS:**

Certain vitamin deficiencies, depression, medication reactions and even sleep issues are some examples of diagnoses that can contribute to memory loss. While these and other causes are reversible causes of memory loss they must be caught early. If left untreated they might cause permanent memory loss. The key is early diagnosis and effective treatment.

## **OTHER CAUSES OF MEMORY LOSS:**

The two most common causes of memory loss are Alzheimer's disease and an entity called vascular dementia.

### **Alzheimer's disease:**

In Alzheimer's disease there is destruction of brain tissue due to the abnormal formation of proteins in the brain that lead to plaques. These proteins first attack the 'hippocampus,' which is the area in the brain that plays a vital role in the formation of new memories. To date there is no approved treatment that stops or delays the damage being done to the brain in these patients. When this is diagnosed early however, with proper treatment, memory function can be preserved longer than in those without treatment (more on that later).

Although, at this time, there is no treatment to stop the damage done to the brain by Alzheimer's disease the symptoms can be slowed with proper therapy. This means that if one is diagnosed in the earliest stages their memory stays intact longer which will allow for many more years of independent living. Isn't that everyone's goal? Additionally, there is very exciting research going on right now that will hopefully lead to treatment that will stop the progression of this condition.

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## Vascular Dementia:

Everyone has heard of a stroke. A stroke is like a heart attack but in the brain. In fact some call it a “brain attack and is an example of something that may lead to vascular dementia. This is caused by atherosclerosis or hardening of the arteries. You don’t need a full blown stroke to have memory loss from vascular dementia as other damage from atherosclerosis can also cause memory loss. Unfortunately, once damage has been done to the brain from vascular dementia, it cannot be undone. There is much we can do however to slow down or prevent further damage due to atherosclerosis. So, once again the key is early diagnosis (do you see a pattern developing here?). With aggressive management of risk factors and lifestyle improvement vascular dementia can usually be avoided all together.

## What can you do?

Is there anything you can do? The good news is the answer is a resounding YES! Here are eight suggestions of things that have been proven to help:

- 1) Get tested: There is a test available in our office that takes about 15 minutes of your time and is 97% accurate in distinguishing between the memory of normal aging and dangerous memory loss at its earliest stages. If diagnosed early, as noted above, there is very good treatment to keep your memory healthy for a long time. Yes, the cost of this test is covered by insurance.
- 2) Exercise: Doing only 45 minutes of aerobic exercise twice each week decreases the risk of cognitive impairment by 32 – 50%.
- 3) Watch what you eat: eating 5 – 7 servings of fruits or vegetables everyday decreases your risk for Alzheimer’s disease by 20%. If you follow a Mediterranean diet (low in saturated fats, using healthy oils, eating fish, nuts, vegetables and fruit) you can reduce your risk by 38%.
- 4) Watch your waist line: Those who do have central obesity have about twice the risk for dementia.
- 5) Watch your blood pressure: If the top number of your blood pressure is less than 120 your risk for dementia goes down by about 25%.

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- 6) Know your cholesterol: People whose HDL cholesterol is less than 45 or whose LDL cholesterol is above 100 have twice the risk for dementia. And certain cholesterol drugs may prevent your chance of developing dementia by 40 – 50%.
- 7) Turn off the television: People who watch 2 or more hours of TV per day have a 20% greater chance of developing dementia than those who watch less.
- 8) Treat your depression: If you suffer from depression, seek medical attention. Untreated, long-term depression can increase the chance of dementia by 4 fold.

One of our core values at PPMA is to keep you in optimal health. We hope this information will serve as the beginning of the discussion. Of course all recommendations must be tailored to your individual needs. Please call to discuss if you have any questions or concerns.

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