

(FORGETFUL?) IS SOMETHING WRONG?

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If we loose or forget familiar and valuable objects, keys, wallets, forget cooking on the stove, or get lost in familiar surroundings, we may be experiencing some form of what Psychologists call “dementia”.

Generally, this term describes a group of symptoms, including memory loss, confusion, and disorientation that is severe enough to interfere with social or occupational functioning. The condition may be classified according to severity, as mildly impaired (early stage), moderately impaired (middle), or severely impaired (late stage).

Reversible dementia may be caused by a variety conditions or diseases. These include:

- Depression
- Vitamin deficiencies (niacin and thiamine)
- Anemia
- Infections
- Hypothyroidism
- Brain tumors
- Medications
- Malnutrition

In these instances, successful treatment can result in reversal of the intellectual decline. About 10 to 15% of dementias are reversible.

The second most common cause of dementia is “multi-infarct dementia” (MID). This condition is caused by small strokes in the brain tissue, usually due to a blood clot, and is not a degenerative condition.

Alzheimer’s Disease remains the most common cause of dementia and results in a degenerative decline in mental functioning through the deterioration and loss of brain cells.

Other causes of dementia include exposure to toxic substances, head trauma, Parkinson’s Disease, Huntington’s Disease, and HIV Disease.

Thorough examination and evaluations, under strict medical direction, are necessary before any assumptions or diagnosis can be made. And, it may take time to make a proper diagnosis of dementia. Often, combinations of prescribed medications can mimic the symptoms. Grief, loss, depression and stress too can mimic this malady. Even small quantities of alcohol, in combination with medication, can produce and appearance of dementia. In such cases, however, cessation and re-prescribing could be expected to result in a fading of symptoms.

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