



Wealth Management
Royal Trust

Memory problems: Age-related or a warning sign?

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Memory lapses can be a fairly common part of ageing. Most people have been in an unpleasant situation where they have trouble remembering someone's name, or simply forgotten where they placed their house keys.

These occasional episodes of memory loss tend to become more frequent as people grow older. In fact, nearly 40 percent of Canadians face some form of normal age-related memory loss.¹ But while these common signs of mild forgetfulness can be manageable, they shouldn't be ignored, as they may indicate a developing cognitive problem.

Common warning signs

Difficulty expressing thoughts or finding the right words

If simple vocabulary becomes hard and conversations are difficult to understand, this could be a sign of a cognitive impairment.¹

Trouble completing ordinary tasks

If you or someone you love is struggling with daily tasks, such as using the oven, it's important to seek medical attention.

Changes in mood and behaviour

A shift in an individual's basic disposition or temperament—like from being shy to outgoing—isn't normal, and may be a sign of dementia or a mood disorder.²

Misplacing things more often than usual

A person living with a cognitive impairment may put things in inappropriate places and be unable to go back and find them.²

Getting lost while walking or driving in a familiar area

People with a cognitive impairment, like dementia, can lose the sense of direction and spatial orientation, becoming lost in familiar places, such as their own street.²

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¹ Healthy Ageing and Geriatrics Program, Sinai Health System. (2019). *Managing Mild Cognitive Impairment, Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias*. Available at: https://sinaigeriatrics.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/MCI-and-Dementia_Web.pdf

² Alzheimer Society of Canada. (2018). *Alzheimer's disease 10 warning signs*. Available at: <https://alzheimer.ca/sites/default/files/documents/10-warning-signs.pdf>

Next steps

- ☐ A proper diagnosis is the first step in treating cognitive impairment. If you or someone you know is concerned about memory loss, or problems with thinking and completing familiar tasks, talk to your doctor.
- ☐ Seek appropriate care based on your symptoms, including dealing with the emotional side of your or your loved one's diagnosis.
- ☐ Start the conversation about how you would like your wishes around your care and living options to be carried out, and involve your loved ones in the planning process. This can be a meaningful experience and will avoid decision-making at a time of added stress.
- ☐ Ensure you have a Will and powers of attorney in place. These essential documents help you and your family ensure your wishes are met for your care and for your property.
- ☐ Maintain a safe environment that provides quality of life and support. If you're caring for a person living with dementia, making changes to their living environment, like putting reminder notes in well-used areas or simple home adaptations to make it easier to complete daily tasks, can help them adjust to their changing abilities.

Helpful resources

Alzheimer Society of Canada: www.alzheimer.ca

Elder Caring Inc.: www.eldercaring.ca

National Institute on Ageing: www.nia-ryerson.ca

Sinai Health, Healthy Ageing and Geriatrics Health Education Resources: www.sinaigeriatrics.ca/healtheducation/

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