

## TIPS AND TECHNIQUES TO MANAGE MEMORY DIFFICULTIES

There are lots of strategies you can use to work around any memory difficulties. For example:

- Relax! When trying to remember, take the time you need and don't stress. There's no need to hurry.
- Place important or commonly lost items such as money, phone and charger, hearing aid, glasses etc. in the same spot every time e.g. keys on a hook by the front door, keep important telephone numbers by the telephone.
- Write it down e.g. make a "to do" list and keep it in somewhere you see it every day, use a calendar, diary, mobile phone, or notebook to record appointments and information from conversations.
- Set the alarm on your watch or phone, or use a timer, to remind you to start or stop an activity.
- Take photos with your phone to remember things when out and about, for example, where you parked your car.
- Have a routine for your day and week. You could set a time each day that you have meals, rests, medication, social activities and planned exercise.

## IS IT DEMENTIA?

The main difference between normal memory loss due to ageing and memory loss that may be caused by dementia is that the problems in age-related memory loss don't affect your ability to go about your day normally.

More serious memory problems can be symptoms of dementia. These include:

- Becoming lost in an area you know very well
- Asking the same questions over and over again
- Getting things from the past mixed up with the present
- Having trouble with managing money, using the telephone, using transportation or remembering to take medications.

## TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

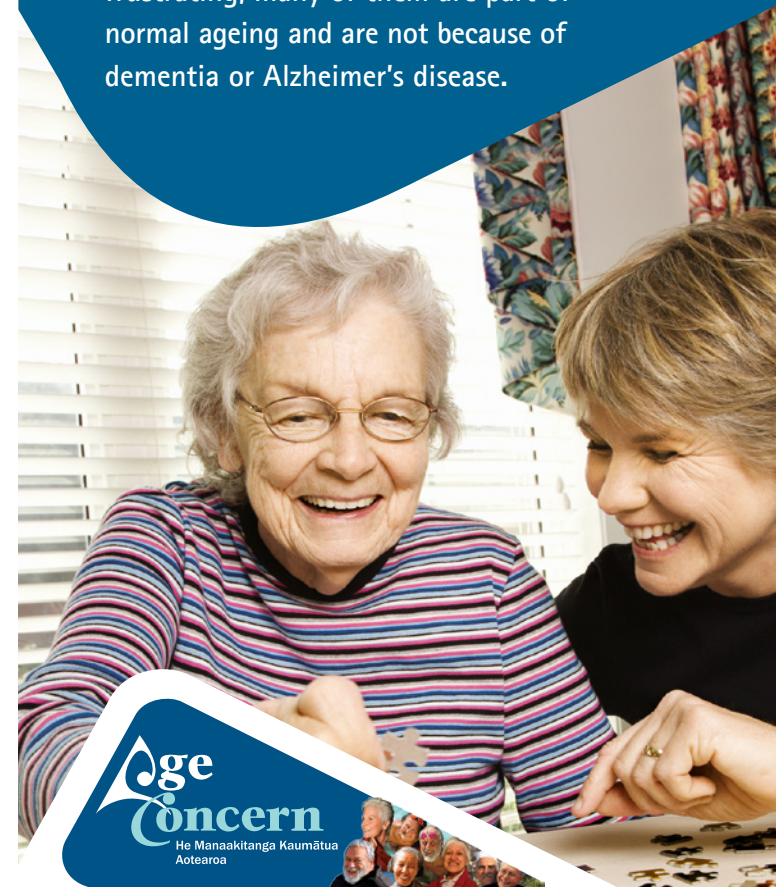
If you are concerned about your memory, medication, depression, or other conditions, you should talk to your doctor, practice nurse, or health professional. This may provide some peace of mind, and they can investigate the causes of any memory difficulties, and discuss possible strategies or treatment with you.

*Age Concern New Zealand would like to acknowledge Dr. Bridget Burmester for her advice on this resource.*





# MEMORY & AGEING

- Where did I put my glasses?
- It's on the tip of my tongue!
- What did I come in here for?

Mild memory loss affects everyone. While memory difficulties can be very frustrating, many of them are part of normal ageing and are not because of dementia or Alzheimer's disease.



## CONTACT US:

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**Age Concern**  
He Manaakitanga Kaumātua  
Aotearoa

*Serving the needs of older people*

# MEMORY AND AGEING



## MEMORY CHANGES WITH AGE

Our other abilities may stay the same or get better with age, such as vocabulary, skills that you are very good at, and remembering social things like appointments or family gatherings.

However some of the parts of your memory that tend to become more challenging as you age include taking longer to think things through, finding it harder to do more than one thing at a time, and remembering more mundane information (like what you wanted at the supermarket).

When some of these things happen occasionally, they are usually just normal memory challenges or forgetfulness:

- Misplacing keys, glasses, or other items
- Momentarily forgetting someone's name
- Occasionally having to "search" for a word
- Forgetting to run an errand
- Forgetting an event from the distant past
- When driving, briefly forgetting where to turn

## OTHER CAUSES OF MEMORY DIFFICULTIES

There are lots of other possible causes of memory difficulties:

- Not paying attention – it's harder to remember information if you don't pay attention to it in the first place. Try to focus on only one task at a time.
- Medications and medical conditions – some may have side effects that affect your memory.
- Mental health – Trouble concentrating can be a symptom of depression, anxiety, or stress.

## NEED MORE INFO?

For more information and some useful links on memory and ideas on managing difficulties, go to our website: [www.ageconcern.org.nz/memory](http://www.ageconcern.org.nz/memory) or contact your local Age Concern.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

Memory is linked to your overall health and wellbeing or hauora. You can look after your health and memory by:

## STAYING MENTALLY ACTIVE

It is never too late to start exercising the brain. Try learning a new skill or practice mentally challenging activities such as reading, crosswords, Sudoku, puzzles, computer activities, and crafts. What counts is that it's both regular and varied. Keep trying new things and things that are difficult for you, to encourage your brain to make new connections.

## KEEPING HEALTHY



**Exercise:** Being fit helps improve memory and learning. Even small amounts of exercise can make a difference – as long as it's regular. You could try dancing, kapahaka, walking, or joining an exercise group.



**Nutrition:** Eat and drink regularly. Remember we need to put good fuel into our engines! You might like to take a class in cooking and nutrition.



**Sleep:** Lack of sleep makes it harder to focus and learn, and your brain does the work to make a memory stick while you are sleeping.



**Mental health:** Practise activities that reduce stress and bring you joy. If you're feeling sad or lonely and all this feels too hard, talk to somebody – your GP, a trusted friend or family member, or call your local Age Concern.



**Get social:** make sure you stay involved with your friends, family, and neighbourhood or community.