

Treatable Causes of Memory Loss

Many older adults suffer from memory loss but never receive proper medical attention because of the belief that it is a normal part of the aging process. More than 70 medical conditions have symptoms that mimic Alzheimer's disease and may cause memory problems. Below are a few of the more common, treatable conditions. Early diagnosis and treatment could improve memory.

- **Poor Nutrition:** Body chemistry can become imbalanced from eating meals lacking the full range of necessary nutrients.
- **Dehydration:** Many people do not drink enough fluids, or they consume primarily caffeinated beverages, which flush fluids out of the body.
- **Fluctuation in Blood Sugar:** People who develop diabetes late in life may go for years without realizing they should ask their physician to check their blood sugar.
- **Thyroid Deficiency:** Possible thyroid deficiency can be checked by a physician and remedied with medication.
- **Infection:** Urinary tract or bladder infections are the most common infection, but any infection can cause memory loss.
- **Medication Combinations:** Taking multiple pills every day can result in mix-ups or medication interactions.
- **Medication Toxicity:** Occasionally, too much medication accumulates in the blood. For example, Digoxin (Lanoxin) is a heart medication, which can become toxic.
- **Depression:** Some people lose interest in others and become confused when they get depressed. Antidepressant medication may help significantly.
- **Sensory Losses:** Loss of hearing or sight may interfere with orientation to time and place.
- **Lung Disease:** Decreased lung capacity may mean insufficient oxygen to the brain. Memory loss may completely resolve when the person receives oxygen treatments.
- **Cancer:** Tumors in the brain, liver, or other organs can lead to memory loss. Prompt diagnosis may mean that the tumor can be removed or reduced through treatment.
- **Sleep Apnea:** Impaired breathing while sleeping may mean insufficient oxygen to the brain. Memory loss may completely resolve when sleep apnea is properly treated.
- **Toxic House:** Furnaces sometimes malfunction and leave carbon monoxide in the air, producing confusion and sleepiness. Fixing the furnace may restore alertness. Installing carbon monoxide detectors can alert to future leaks.

Adapted from Alzheimer's Orange County, 9/19/16.