

PREPARE —

Getting the Conversation Started: *The Latest Data and Guidelines on the Integration of Cognitive Health Screening into Clinical Practice*

KEY BENEFITS OF EARLY COGNITIVE SCREENING



Early disease detection – some changes in memory or thinking may be linked to treatable or reversible conditions



Improved brain health through lifestyle modifications





Informed planning and decision-making for the future

Initiating Meaningful Conversations on Cognitive Health in Primary Care

Cognitive health is the ability to think, learn, and remember clearly. Discussing cognitive changes early can make a big difference in staying healthy and independent longer. If you or a loved one has concerns about memory loss or changes in cognitive behavior, talking to your doctor is an important first step to support brain function now and in the future.

Common Barriers to early detection and solutions in primary care

Stigma	Everyone experiences changes in memory as they age. Sharing your concerns with your doctor helps your care team provide the care and support you need	
Perceived limited benefits of early detection	Knowing about changes early gives you more time to plan, make lifestyle choices, and access treatments or support	
Feeling rushed or unsure how to bring it up with your doctor	You can talk with your doctor or any member of your healthcare team about your memory or thinking. Even a short conversation can start the process — turn over for a few simple ways to begin	

EARLY CONVERSATIONS CAN LEAD TO EARLY ACTION

The sooner you talk about it, the more options you and your care team have



A GUIDE TO HELP YOU START THE CONVERSATION ABOUT YOUR COGNITIVE HEALTH

When to initiate the conversation?

- During your Annual Wellness Visit
- If you or your family notice changes in memory or attention
- If you've missed appointments or medications
- Anytime you want to learn about improving brain health

How can I prepare for the appointment?

- Document changes in your health, including mood, memory, and behaviors
- Bring a list of your current prescriptions and over-the-counter medications (including vitamins or supplements)
- Bring your care partner, family member, or friend with you
- Make a list of questions to ask your doctor

How to initiate the conversation during the appointment?

- "I've noticed I forget things more often—is that normal?"
- "Can you suggest ways to keep my memory strong?"
- "My family says I seem more forgetful lately. Should I get checked?"
- "What can I do to support my brain health?"

What to expect if my doctor suggests further testing?

- Ask questions
 - What tests will be performed?
 - What does each test involve?
 - How long will the tests take?
 - How long until I learn the results?
- Check whether your doctor would refer you to a specialist:

GERIATRICIAN—
specializes in care
of older adults
with dementia



PSYCHIATRIST—
expertise in mental
health and aging



PSYCHOLOGIST—
trained in assessing
memory, attention,
language, reading, and
problem-solving



NEUROLOGIST—
treats dementia
and related diseases



REFER TO THE FOLLOWING SOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Alzheimer's Association®. Communicating With Your Health Care Team. Updated July 2024. (<https://www.alz.org/getmedia/6424b21e-d47c-4d88-a8e7-2dc1a497b304/alzheimers-dementia-communicating-with-your-healthcare-team-ts.pdf>)

Alzheimer's Association®. Visiting Your Doctor. (<https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/diagnosis/visiting-your-doctor>)

National Institute on Aging. Cognitive Health and Older Adults (<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/brain-health/cognitive-health-and-older-adults>)

Sabbagh MN, Boada M, Borson S, et al. Rationale for early diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment (MCI) supported by emerging digital technologies. *J Prev Alzheimers Dis*. 2020;7:158-164. (<https://doi.org/10.14283/jpad.2020.19>)

The Alzheimer's Project. Physician Guidelines for the Screening, Evaluation, and Management of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias. 4th Edition. June 2024. (<https://championsforhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Alzheimers-Clinical-Guidelines-2024-Booklet-WEB.pdf>)

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