



Living well with memory difficulties

About Mild Cognitive Impairment

This information booklet may be useful if you, a family member or friend is having memory difficulties and has received a diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment.

It is not designed to be read all in one go, but rather to be worked through gradually and referred back to regularly.

We hope this information helps you to adjust to the changes you have experienced and to discover that you can still enjoy a good quality of life.

MCI describes a disorder/diagnosis that describes cognitive decline which is more than what one would expect from normal ageing, but is not severe enough for a diagnosis of dementia.

These may include:

- Forgetting phone messages, conversations, appointments
- Forgetting where you put something
- Difficulty recalling events
- Repeating the same stories
- Repeatedly asking the same question
- Difficulty finding words
- Forgetting to take your medicine
- Forgetting what a word means or what an object does
- People with MCI can also find it difficult to concentrate and may be easily distracted or struggle to follow through a task or instruction or do more than one thing at a time (multi task).



What causes MCI?

Some people will have MCI because of stress, anxiety, depression, physical illness or changes in their blood circulation. But we do not always know why someone develops MCI.

Someone with MCI may go on to develop dementia (10-15% of people attending a memory clinic -Alzheimer's Society 2010). **But many don't.**

Are there drug treatments?

Dementia drugs are **not** available on the NHS for people who have MCI because there is no clinical evidence that they are helpful.

How can we prevent memory getting worse?

Physical, social and mental activity, along with a healthy diet, may help to prevent memory and thinking difficulties from getting worse.

Stress and memory problems

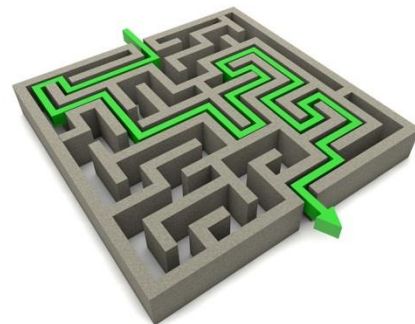
Memory problems can be difficult and stressful for everyone. Stress can then make things worse.

You may feel low, frustrated, angry, resentful, depressed and fearful for the future. If this happens, don't bottle things up; talk to a family member, friend, your GP or other professional.

Look out for signs of stress, such as being irritable, tense, changes in eating or drinking habits or rushing around.

To reduce stress:

- Plan ahead and develop routines.
- Plan enjoyable events or activities (and write them on the calendar!)
- Don't take on too much.
- Try to relax; sit quietly and focus on your breathing for a little while each day, and imagine pleasant and relaxing scenes.



Remember

It is the memory problems causing the difficulties; it isn't being done on purpose and that it may not matter that a pen is in the wrong cupboard!

There are things you can do to make life easier and you can still enjoy a good quality of life!

Things you can do to help yourself

1. Write down all appointments in ONE clear and simple diary or wall calendar.
2. Check the diary or calendar at the same time each day (for example, after breakfast and after dinner).
3. Keep a notepad by the phone for messages.
4. Use an answering machine for phone messages.
5. Decide on a consistent place to keep handbags, keys and wallets.
6. Attach important items so they cannot be mislaid (using a neck cord for glasses, tying keys to a belt.)
7. Label desk drawers and cupboards.
8. Establish a daily routine.
9. Set alarms to remind you to do things.
10. Ask your local pharmacist about having tablets placed in a dosette box. This can help you to remember to take tablets.
11. You may wish to keep a journal and use photographs to remember events.
12. Minimise distractions (TV, radio) and avoid stressful situations.
13. Allow enough time for doing things and for making decisions. (If you have attention difficulties, you will take longer to process information.)
14. Do one thing at a time; one step at a time and at a leisurely pace.
15. Break down tasks into manageable steps
16. If you are struggling to find a word, ask for help, but ask people not to jump in too soon.
17. Make sure you use your glasses and hearing aids, if you need them.



Things family and friends can do to help

1. Provide written instructions to support verbal instructions but make sure they are clear and simple.
2. If the person strays off the topic, gently remind them what they were talking about.



3. Give cues and prompts to help someone trying to recall a word or event. But make sure they are obvious and likely to lead to the right answer. If they lead to the wrong answer, this can make remembering even more difficult.

Example

Q - "What is his name?" It isn't helpful for partners/friends to say "his name begins with the letter J."

4. If the person keeps asking the same question, it won't help to remind them that they have already asked that question. Instead of repeating answers to the same questions, try asking the person for the information at regular intervals.

Person A - "What is for dinner?"

Person B - "Fish and chips"

After a few seconds

Person B should ask "So what did we say we'd have for dinner?"

Hopefully, Person A will remember and say "Fish and Chips".

Doing this, can reduce the need to ask the same question.

5. Talk with someone one-on-one rather than in a large group.
6. Avoid talking over the other person.
7. If the person has difficulties understanding, try to be at eye level with the other person and use gestures as well as speech.
8. Use short sentences, emphasise key words, speak slowly and repeat if necessary

Other wellbeing tips

- ✓ **Have a balanced diet** and keep to a healthy weight.
- ✓ **Drink enough water** (2.5 litres per day). This needs to be increased in hot weather and after exercise. Some people have medical conditions which affect how much water they should drink, so ask your GP if you are unsure.
- ✓ **Talk to your GP about taking B vitamins;** which have been associated with memory.
- ✓ **Take regular exercise.** It's very good for your brain. Try walking, gardening, swimming, cycling, exercise classes, dancing. Walking up the stairs instead of taking the lift or getting off the bus a couple of stops early (to give yourself a bit more of a walk) can also help.

Talk to your GP if you are planning to increase your exercise levels.

- ✓ **Get enough sleep;** 7-9 hours per night; Avoid large meals and caffeine before bedtime and try to relax before bed.
- ✓ **Get your blood pressure regularly checked.**
- ✓ **Don't drink too much alcohol.** Men should not exceed 3-4 units per day; for women its 2-3 units per day.
- ✓ **Keep active socially**
People who meet up with friends and lead an active social life tend to keep in better mental health.
- ✓ **Train your brain**
Try reading every day, doing crosswords, playing a musical instrument, dancing or learning a language. Do things you like doing - as you're more likely to keep doing them!



Driving

Driving may be one way to keep your independence. However, the skills needed for safe driving on our busy roads can start to decline with age.

If you are not sure whether you are safe to continue driving, you may wish to contact the DVLA on **0300 790 6806** for further advice and information.

You could also have a driving assessment at Living Mobility and Driving Centre, The Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Fishponds, Bristol BS16 2LP Tel: 0117 965 9353.

If you stop driving, you may wish to look into alternatives. There are other types of transport and services which can help with practical matters, such as shopping.

North Somerset Social Services should be able to provide you with more information (please see contact details at the back of this booklet).

Other useful contacts

These organisations may be able to offer additional support and advice to you and your family.

Information on public services including advice on benefits and caring:

www.direct.gov.uk

<https://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance/overview>

Attendance Allowance Help line Tel: 0345 605 6055

<https://www.gov.uk/dla-disability-living-allowance-benefit/overview>

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) Helpline Tel: 0345 712 3456

North Somerset Council Tax and Benefits call centre

Tel: 01934 888 144

Care Connect (Social Services) Tel: 01275 888 801

Carers UK

www.carersuk.org

Advice line for carers Tel: 0808 808 7777, open Mon-Fri 10am until 4pm.
Calls from a landline are free of charge.

Age UK

www.ageuk.org.uk

National advice line Tel: 0800 169 2081 or Tel: 0845 643 4701

Age UK Somerset Tel: 01823 345 613

Carers Trust Phoenix (previously known as Crossroads)

www.carers.org

Care and Carer's services Tel: 01934 411 859 or Tel: 01934 411 840

NHS

www.nhs.uk/carersdirect

Carers direct helpline Tel: 0300 123 1053

Alzheimer's Society

www.alzheimers.org.uk Useful fact sheets can be downloaded from this website. If you would like to order paper copies please call Xcalibre on Tel: 01628 529240 or email alzheimers@xcalibrefs.co.uk

National helpline Tel: 0300 222 1122

Alzheimer's society North Somerset Tel: 01934 414 214

Dementia UK

www.dementiauk.org National helpline Tel: 0800 888 6678

The Stroke Association

National helpline Tel: 0303 3033 100

www.stroke.org.uk

North Somerset Stroke Association Tel: 01275 870 328

Rethink Mental Illness

<https://www.rethink.org/>

Tel: 01823 365 304

Care & Repair

www.wecr.org.uk

National Tel: 0300 323 0700

Local Tel: 01275 858 518

Wiltshire Farm Foods

www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com

Freephone: 0800 066 3366

Local Tel: 01275 371993.

Community Connect

Tel: 01275 888 803

Minimise nuisance calls and mail

Register with **Telephone Preference Service** 0845 070 0707

Register with **Mail & Telephone Preference Service** 0845 703 4599

Legal and welfare

DVLA Tel: 0300 790 6806

<https://www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions/telling-dvla-about-a-medical-condition-or-disability>

DVLA – Driver’s Medical Enquiries Swansea, SA99 1TU

Office of the Public Guardian Tel: 0300 456 0300

www.publicguardian.gov.uk

Office of the Public Guardian, PO Box 16185, Birmingham, B2 2WH

Healthwatch Bristol – Telecare Technology

Tel: 0117 269 0400 www.healthwatchbristol.co.uk

Healthwatch Bristol, Telecare Technology, 1-3 St John’s Court,
Whiteladies Road, Bristol, BS8 2QY

Contact us

www.awp.nhs.uk

PALS

To make a comment, raise a concern or make a complaint, please contact the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Tel: 01225 362900

Free phone: 0800 073 1778

Email: awp.pals@nhs.net

Other languages and formats

If you need this information in other formats (such as large print, audio, Braille) or in another language, please call the PALS number.

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