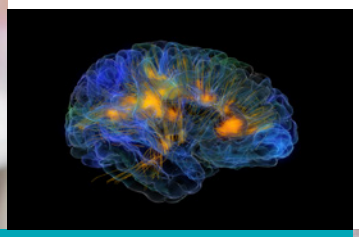

A Patient's Guide to Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)

This material is provided by UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences as an educational resource for patients.

UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences

Memory and Aging Center

Models for illustrative purposes only.

What is mild cognitive impairment?

Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) is a condition that causes a slight, noticeable change in memory and/or thinking skills but is not severe enough to affect the person's ability to complete daily tasks. Individuals with MCI may have consistent memory problems but can keep working and socializing without help.

What causes MCI?

The cause of MCI is unknown. Experts believe that in some cases MCI may be a very early stage of Alzheimer's disease (AD), but not all individuals with MCI develop AD.

How is age related to MCI?

Most people with MCI start to have symptoms in their 50s, although some people have shown signs earlier or later.

What happens in MCI?

People with MCI may have different symptoms, because MCI appears in one of two forms: *amnestic* and *nonamnestic.* Amnestic MCI mainly affects memory. People with amnestic MCI may start to forget important information that they could remember easily before, like recent conversations or events. Nonamnestic MCI affects other thinking skills, such as decision-making, judgment, and visual awareness. People with nonamnestic MCI may have difficulty handling finances or organizing tasks.

Are there medicines to treat MCI?

There is no cure for MCI yet, and there are no specific medications used to treat MCI. It is important that a provider carefully evaluates any medicines the person with MCI is taking, because some medications may make memory symptoms worse. If the provider believes that the person's MCI might represent an early stage of Alzheimer's disease, he or she may suggest a trial of medication called cholinesterase inhibitors. Some of these medicines include donepezil, galantamine or rivastigmine, and they may help prevent memory symptoms from getting worse.

What factors determine progression to dementia?

A research review done by Dr. Kristine Yaffe from UCSF shows seven risk factors for Alzheimer's disease and other causes of dementia that can possibly be reduced or adjusted to help prevent changes in thinking skills and/or memory.

- Type 2 diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Midlife obesity
- Smoking
- Depression
- Little or no mental activity
- Little or no physical exercise

Research also shows that up to 50% of Alzheimer's disease cases may be related to these modifiable risk factors, so it is important to keep your brain and body as healthy as possible.

What other things help?

Research has shown that physical exercise helps to enhance brain health and improves mood and general fitness. A balanced diet, enough sleep, and limited alcohol intake are other important ways to promote good brain health. Other illnesses that affect the brain, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol, should also be treated if present.

Resources

Alzheimer's Association: alz.org

Family Caregiver Alliance: caregiver.org

National Institutes of Health: nih.gov

Models for illustrative purposes only.