



# PENNSYLVANIA PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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## What Are The Signs Of Memory Impairment And What Can Be Done About It?

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With the aging of our population and wide news coverage of topics such as Alzheimer's disease, more people are becoming concerned about memory impairment in themselves and their loved ones.

The signs of memory problems are: **1. general forgetfulness** – e.g., forgetting what you've been told, missing appointments, leaving appliances running, repetitiveness is common; **2. change in activities** – e.g., a formerly socially active person no longer maintains friendships due to difficulty relating to others, or embarrassment about memory problems; **3. confusion and disorganization** – a formerly self-sufficient individual becomes easily confused by tasks, such as balancing a checkbook, which used to be routine; **4. change in personal habits** – personal hygiene and/or housekeeping chores are neglected; **5. change in personality** – the person just "doesn't seem like him/herself."

Memory problems could be caused by dementia, or by certain medications, or come from stress and depression. The family physician can evaluate medications; psychologists and psychiatrists treat stress or depression; a neuropsychologist or neurologist has expertise in the area of dementia. While there is currently no cure for dementia, certain types can be slowed with medication, and a patient may be able to participate in a research study of new medications.

Finally, if you're dealing with a memory problem, don't isolate yourself. Support services such as counseling, support groups, or respite care can be of great help, and are available through your count's agency on aging or other nonprofit organizations.

**Talk to someone who can help.** If you would like the name of a qualified psychologist in your area, please try our Psychologist Locator.