

Is It Dementia? Early Warning Signs

Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia can be a scary thought as you age, and we often feel anxious when little brain blips happen and we can't find our keys or can't remember a word.

Being a little forgetful is common. Dr. Daniel Litoff, an internal medicine physician at Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center in Chicago, Ill., points out some key warning signs that we should pay attention to.

"The most common sign is difficulty with everyday tasks requiring short term memory," says Dr. Litoff. This includes:

- Missing appointments
- Forgetting to pay bills
- Misplacing items at home and forgetting where they are
- Getting lost when driving
- Repeating questions multiple times

Seeing these signs can be frightening, but it's best to avoid uncertainty and take your loved one to a doctor right away. Your doctor can also talk to you about ways to keep your brain healthy and protected against Alzheimer's or dementia.



The Heart-Brain Connection

Did you know the same habits your doctor recommends to prevent heart disease can also help keep dementia at bay?

That's exactly what a group of researchers found when comparing changes in brain function among 6,626 individuals with varying degrees of heart health.

Researchers used the American Heart Association's Life's Simple 7 tool, a checklist of seven behaviors shown to positively impact heart health. The data shows that over 8½ years, with each heart-healthy measure that was adopted, participants suffered from less cognitive decline and memory loss.

The American Heart Association's *Life's Simple 7 Tool* recommends the following heart and brain-healthy habits. Which ones are you already doing?

- Keep your blood pressure within a normal range.
- Control your cholesterol levels.
- Reduce the amount of sugar you consume.
- Maintain an active lifestyle.
- Make healthy food choices.
- Maintain a healthy body weight.
- Stop smoking immediately.

Prayer: Thank You for the miracle of connection in my body, God. What affects one part is connected to another part. May I value, cherish and care for all of it!