



## Ageing Wisely With Linda

Consultations/Consulting • Counseling/Coaching  
Expert on Dementia • Speaking/Teaching

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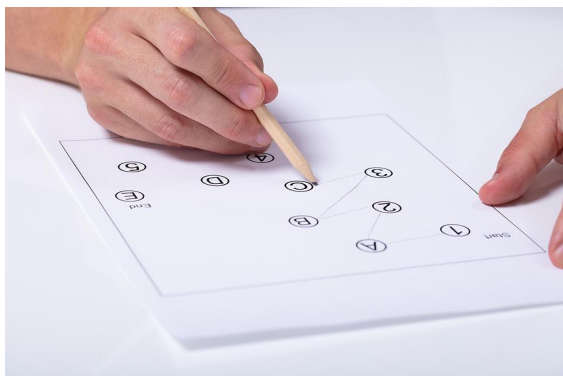
## What is Dementia?

My mother cannot remember anything. She must have dementia! This might be wrong. Just because someone is past a certain age and having problems with short term memory does not necessarily mean she has a dementia; it could actually be an infection, dehydration, depression or another reversible cause. That is why a good evaluation is necessary before you just accept her deficit without a real diagnosis.

### What Else Could It Be?

Often an individual gets a diagnosis of “cognitive impairment” because their thinking and remembering is not in the observable normal range. This issue can be the result of a high fever, infection, medications, brain tumor, or a progressing neurological condition. It might be a temporary condition called delirium.

### Mild Cognitive Impairment



MCI or mild cognitive impairment is often a precursor to Alzheimer’s disease. In order to have this diagnosis, one must have been given a test (such as the [MoCA](#)) that shows impaired thinking ability, and this difficulty must also be observable by family and friends. Many individuals with this diagnosis never progress to Alzheimer’s disease, and they learn to live with the short-term memory loss.

# Preventing or Slowing the Progress of an MCI



All individuals with MCI should look at changing their lifestyles to preserve their cognition, if possible. That change likely means adopting a healthy brain diet. The [Mediterranean Diet](#), the [MIND Diet](#), or an [anti-inflammatory diet](#) are favored. Before making any changes, consult with your physician.

Sleep is another consideration in cognitive health. The latest research is uncovering the importance of REM sleep. This is that deep sleep when we are dreaming. If you or your family member is having trouble with getting 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night, consult your physician. You can try staying away from screens (TV, phone, computer) for an hour before bed, listening to a guided meditation with relaxing music, and having a cup of sleepy time tea before you try any medications.

The other four areas needed for a healthy brain are:

1. **Exercise:** Get moving for at least 30 minutes a day.
2. **Mindfulness:** Meditation in any form will do.
3. **Socialization:** If possible, this should be something that has the individual interacting with others – volunteering, classroom learning, and lectures are some to consider.



4. **Brain games:** Examples include Sudoku, word searches, [Lumosity](#), and more. When we learn new information, it becomes the catalyst for “neurogenesis” – gaining new brain cells.

# From MCI to Dementia

Mild Cognitive Impairment moves into Dementia once the individual needs help with one of the activities of daily living – this could be anything from personal care to getting lost while driving. So, now the individual is having trouble with memory and thinking, and has one other deficit. This move does not necessarily tell the medical providers what type of dementia is occurring, which could be important to know for planning purposes. That level of diagnosis will take further evaluation and testing.

This disease process is a challenge for everyone in the family, and it is important to get some coaching and guidance early in the process. An [Aging Life Care Professional](#) could be a helpful resource for everyone. We want to focus on quality of life and living each day with joy, despite a progressive illness. There are [support groups](#) for caregivers, as well as for those with the diagnosis. These are wonderful sources of hope and empowerment. [My book](#) is another resource every adult child of an aging parent needs in order to be prepared for the changes to come, especially if you are dealing with any cognitive changes in your parent.

Do find hope and joy in each day. Try not to focus on worry and disappointment. Do get professional guidance on a “Road Map,” designed with the values of the person with the diagnosis as your guide. And, as a family caregiver, allow time for what gives your life value and purpose throughout this long journey.

**Affirmation: “I will seek joy and find gratitude in each day – no matter the journey before me.”**

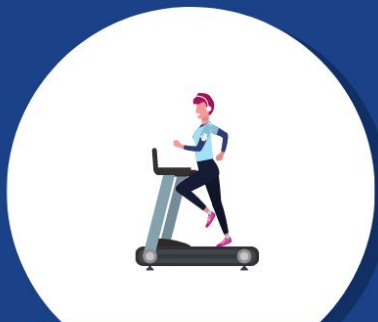


# 6 HEALTHY BRAIN HABITS



**Healthy Diet**

The Mediterranean Diet, MIND Diet, or an anti-inflammatory diet are favored for brain health.



**Regular Physical Activity**

Aim for 30 minutes of exercise every day. Some options to explore include gardening, dancing, and Tai chi.



**Brain Activity**

Take an online course. Learn a new skill. Challenge a friend to a game of Scrabble. Pick up a book of sudoku puzzles.



**Social Activity**

Choose activities that encourage social interaction. You might try volunteering at a school or joining a support group.



**Mindfulness**

This can take many forms, but it should be purposeful and become part of your routine. Set aside 5-10 minutes daily.



**Get Good Sleep**

Creating a sleep routine, including giving your body time to wind down, can help improve your circadian rhythm.