

## Living Well with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)

### What is Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)?

MCI involves noticeable problems with memory, thinking, or word-finding that do not yet interfere significantly with daily life. It is **not dementia**, but it can increase the risk of developing dementia later.

### Possible Causes

- Early Alzheimer's
- Small strokes or TIAs
- Other conditions (e.g., Parkinson's, Lewy body disease)
- Depression, anxiety, or medication side effects (e.g., certain sleeping pills, anticholinergics)
- Vitamin deficiencies, thyroid problems, or alcohol use
- Sometimes part of normal aging with no clear cause.

### Outlook

Not everyone with MCI worsens. Many stay stable or improve (especially if a treatable cause is addressed). About 15% may develop dementia within 2 years, but most do not.

### Key Lifestyle Strategies to Support Brain Health

- **Physical Exercise** (Most promising for brain protection): Aim for regular activity like walking, swimming, or strength training.
- **Healthy Diet**: Follow the MIND diet: Focus on leafy greens, berries, nuts, whole grains, fish, and olive oil. Limit red meat and sweets.
- **Cognitive & Social Activity**: Challenge your brain with puzzles, games, learning new skills, reading, volunteering, or socializing. Use mnemonic devices, lists, and calendars.
- **Manage Health**: Control blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, and treat depression/anxiety. Quit or continue to abstain from smoking. Limit alcohol use.

### Treatment Options

- There is no cure.
- Symptomatic meds (e.g., Donepezil, Memantine) may help thinking temporarily.
- Newer amyloid-targeting infusions (for confirmed Alzheimer's) may slow progression but have risks.
- Vitamins/supplements have not proven to be helpful.

### Planning Ahead

- Monitor complex tasks: managing finances, medications, home repairs, driving, appointments.
- Designate healthcare/financial proxies and discuss future wishes (power of attorney, living will).
- Update estate planning/will.
- Plan future living/support and transportation needs.

### Medication Management

Some medications can worsen memory—review regularly with your doctor.

- Use a weekly pill organizer (filled with intermittent supervision to monitor for any difficulties).

- Keep an up-to-date list of all meds/supplements.
- Bring list to appointments.
- Set reminders/alarms.

Warning signs: Missing doses, confusion about pills, wrong timing.

### **Medical Appointments**

Bring a caregiver to help share information, remember instructions, and ask questions.

Prepare your concerns beforehand, bring an updated list of medications, and note any changes.

### **Driving Safety**

Discuss with your doctors regularly. Get evaluated yearly.

Consider limiting to daytime, familiar routes, local streets, and good weather.

Warning signs: Getting lost, slow reactions, near-misses, aggressive driving, family concerns.

Plan alternatives (ride-sharing, family, public transit, aide) for the future.

### **Financial Safety**

- Share your login and bank information with a trusted loved one and conduct a full financial inventory with them regularly.
- Automate bill payments, consolidate bank accounts and credit cards to simplify, reduce credit card limits and carry only small amounts of cash to control impulsive spending.
- Be wary of scams. Set up alerts for suspicious activity or large transactions.

### **Safety Outside the Home**

- Carry ID, emergency contacts, and a list of your health issues, doctors, and medications.
- Share your phone location with a loved one; use Apple Watch or GPS if necessary to track.
- Travel with a companion.

### **Home Safety (Quick Checklist)**

- **General:** Remove clutter/throw rugs, improve lighting, working smoke/CO detectors, secure firearms/chemicals, consider medical alert system.
- **Floors/Stairs:** No tripping hazards, secure carpets, handrails.
- **Bathrooms:** Grab bars, nonskid mats, shower stool, night lights.
- **Kitchen:** Timers, auto-shutoff appliances, adequate healthy food supply.
- **Outdoors:** Clear walkways, secure doors, good lighting.
- **Living alone:** Consider a nanny cam shared with a trusted person.

### **Key Reminders**

- MCI is common with aging.
- Lifestyle changes can make a real difference.
- Regular check-ups help track progress.
- Talk to your doctors about any concerns.

Stay engaged, active, and connected—many people with MCI continue to live full lives!