

Ask Leyla: What is causing my memory trouble?



November is National Alzheimer's Awareness Month

Q: I've noticed that recently I have trouble remembering words. Do you have any suggestions of what could be causing these lapses in memory?

A: Memory loss can have many causes. How old are you? Have you checked in with your doctor or neurologist for a full workup? This is the first order of business. At the very least, you may be deficient in B12 or have poor circulation.

Have you recently started taking medication? Some medications can cause memory loss. Are you taking a cholesterol lowering medication? Statins are notorious for creating or exacerbating memory deficits because we need cholesterol for proper brain function.

An underactive thyroid can also trigger forgetfulness. Get it checked out.

High blood sugar associated with prediabetes and diabetes can damage blood vessels in the brain, leading to memory problems, confusion and irritability. Indeed, Alzheimer's is known as "Type 3 Diabetes."

Are your cortisol levels high? This is a stress hormone and too much of it can shrink the hippocampus, the part of the brain responsible for memory.

Do you drink alcohol? You may have a thiamin deficiency (vitamin B1) which can impact your speech and word formation. And no, you don't have to consume *a lot* of alcohol to have a thiamin deficiency. A poor diet alone will do it. A severe thiamin deficiency can lead to Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome, a disorder characterized by chronic poor memory, confusion, agitation and hostility.

Maybe your homocysteine is high? High homocysteine is an independent risk factor for dementia, as well as stroke and bone fracture.

As you can see, a full workup with your doctor is critical to reveal the cause of your trouble. Only a proper medical assessment can help determine an appropriate treatment plan for you.

To your health!

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