

Department of  
**Geriatric Medicine**

# Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI): Frequently Asked Questions



# MILD COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT (MCI): FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the difference between normal ageing, MCI and dementia?

- MCI is an intermediate state between normal ageing and dementia.
- Persons with MCI may experience minor difficulties with more challenging tasks but should not have major problems with everyday living.
- In contrast, those with dementia experience problems with everyday tasks and are unable to handle these activities independently.

What are the symptoms of MCI?

- Forgetting things more often
- Misplacing items
- Difficulty keeping track of appointments or social events
- Difficulty following a conversation
- Difficulty with multi-tasking

*Despite these symptoms, a person with MCI can still function independently in the community. However, if the above symptoms affect functioning in the community, the diagnosis of Dementia should be considered instead.*

How is MCI diagnosed?

- MCI is diagnosed by clinical history, physical examination, cognitive assessments and investigations (e.g. blood tests, brain imaging)

Can MCI be treated?

- Currently, there are no proven medications or supplements that have shown significant benefit in treating MCI. However, certain interventions may delay or prevent the progression of MCI to dementia.

If I have MCI, will I definitely progress to a state of dementia?

- Older adults with MCI are at increased risk of progressing to dementia. The risk of MCI progressing to dementia in those > 65 years old is estimated to be 15% over 2 years.
- However, not everyone with MCI will develop dementia. Some people with MCI remain stable over time and some may even improve and revert to normal, especially if a treatable cause of MCI is identified.

## Reference:

- Petersen RC. Practice guideline update summary: Mild cognitive impairment: Report of the Guideline Development, Dissemination, and Implementation Subcommittee of the American Academy of Neurology. *Neurology*. 2018
- Alzheimer's Society Factsheet 470 What is mild cognitive impairment (MCI)?

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