



A publication of the Brown Medicine
Geriatrics Division 401-649-4010

Did you know?

Brown Medicine Geriatrics is currently offering access to on-call physicians via Televisits, in-person wellness and in-person sick visits, Monday through Friday.

Please call 401-649-4010 for more information and/or to schedule an appointment.

Weekend Urgent Care Visits for Primary Care Patients

Until further notice, there are no weekend urgent care visits or walk-in appointments at this time. Brown Medicine Geriatrics has an on call doctor available 24 hours/day – 7 days/week to assist you.

Please call Geriatrics Primary Care to schedule an appointment in advance: 401-649-4010

3 ways to get the Geriatrics Newsletter:

1. Online at: Brownmed.org/division-of-geriatrics-and-palliative-medicine
2. Email: Send an email to Karolyn.McKay@Brownphysicians.org to opt-in or fill out a form at the Geriatrics office
3. Mail: Fill out form at the Geriatrics office and include your address

Dementia Facts:

Dementia is a collection of symptoms that affect memory, thinking, and social abilities, which interfere with day-to-day life. Different diseases can cause dementia such as Alzheimer's disease, stroke, and a combination of both. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of progressive memory loss in older adults. It commonly develops in the eighth or ninth decade of life.

Having memory loss alone does not mean you have dementia. Symptoms of dementia vary depending on the cause, but the most common symptoms include cognitive changes and psychological changes.

Cognitive changes include memory loss, usually noticed by a spouse or close family member. The most common changes are word-finding difficulties, difficulty with visual and spatial abilities, getting lost while driving, difficulty reasoning or problem-solving, difficulty with planning and organization, confusion, and disorientation.

Psychological changes include depression, anxiety, change in behavior, paranoia, agitation, hallucinations, and personality changes.

Q. How is dementia diagnosed?

Our physicians and nurse practitioners will obtain full history, conduct a comprehensive physical examination, which includes cognitive screening, followed by blood work. If needed, we will also order imaging such as CT scan or MRI of the brain.

Q. What are the treatment options?

Treatment depends on the severity of dementia. For persons with mild cognitive impairment, we continue to offer routine office visits and monitor for progression of dementia. For people who develop moderate to the severe stage, there are pharmacological therapies available such as Donepezil (Aricept), Rivastigmine (Exelon) and Galantamine (Razadyne) which work by boosting chemicals in the brain involved with memory and judgment. Another drug is Memantine (Namenda) which also works by regulating chemical messengers in the brain. The benefit of these drugs is modest.

We also treat other conditions such as depression, sleep issues, hallucinations, Parkinsonism, and agitation. We also treat diabetes and hypertension as they are risk factors for stroke.

Q. What can you do to decrease the risk of getting dementia?

There is no right way to prevent dementia; research is ongoing. However, keeping your mind active with mental stimulation techniques such as reading, solving puzzles, memory training, staying physically and socially active, quitting smoking, managing blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, and high body weight. Maintaining good sleep hygiene and eating healthy are also helpful.



To support dementia patients and their caregiver, our practice has a multidisciplinary team which includes physician, nurse practitioners, social worker, nurse care manager, and pharmacists who are specialized in understanding and supporting the needs of both patients and family members involved in the care of older adults affected with dementia.

~ Naga Venkata Rama Krishna Vura, MD

Our Pharmacist's Review of Memory Supplements

Many of us fear dementia and memory loss as we age. There are a number of lifestyle measures and medications that have been shown to help delay or slow the progression of dementia. Patients and caregivers frequently ask for alternative ways to help improve or preserve memory function. Many advertisements and articles promote products that can either prevent or treat memory loss or dementia. These include over-the-counter medications, dietary supplements, and herbal products. It is important to focus on scientific evidence before considering using any of these options. Here is a review of some of the most common products:

Ginkgo biloba – Extracts of the leaves of the Ginkgo biloba tree have been used for many years to treat a variety of conditions. It is commonly sold in capsules or solutions. Many studies in older adults have failed to show any consistent benefit in the prevention of memory loss or dementia. However, there are some studies showing a link between the use of ginkgo biloba and slowing symptoms in patients who already have dementia. This evidence is limited and more research needs to be conducted to be sure of these results. Ginkgo biloba can also interact with many prescriptions drugs. For these reasons, ginkgo biloba is not routinely recommended for the prevention or treatment of dementia.

Omega-3 fatty acids – The most common sources of omega-3 fatty acids are from fish, plant, and nut oils. Foods and diets rich in these oils can help control certain risk factors for the development of dementia, like heart disease. There have been many proposed benefits for supplementing with high-dose capsules of these naturally occurring substances. While there is a lot of evidence to support these supplements for some conditions, like high cholesterol, there is currently not enough evidence for its specific use in treating or preventing memory loss.

Apoaequorin – This protein is found naturally in a certain species of jellyfish and is the main ingredient in the commercial product Prevacen®. While this product claims to improve memory and support brain function, much is still unknown about its long-term benefits and safety. More high-quality research is needed before recommending using Prevacen in older adults.

Vitamins – Vitamins B and E are two of the most common supplements people use to help “boost” or protect their memory. Taking high doses of these vitamins has failed to show any consistent benefit for dementia.

This review is very brief, but the bottom-line is that there is not enough evidence to recommend the routine use any of the above products. Be sure to consult your provider or pharmacist before taking any OTC or herbal product. We can provide more information about safe and effective treatment options for dementia.

~ Marco DelBove, Pharm.D., BCPS

Social Isolation

Older adults may be experiencing increased anxiety and fear due to virus concerns and social isolation. These are some tips to help cope with social isolation:



Stay engaged in home activities and

hobbies: Listening to music, doing puzzles, reading, watching TV shows/movies or journaling are just some types of activities that one can engage in. It is also beneficial to get outdoors for walks, gardening or just sitting outdoors for fresh air, change of environment and to enjoy some natural vitamin D. Engagement in home yoga, exercise or daily meditation for self-care may also be helpful.

Stay connected with family and friends: It is important to stay virtually connected with friends and family. For those who have access to smartphones or other tech devices, Zoom or other video apps can be used; otherwise telephone calls are just as important to stay connected. Some families may choose to visit and stay outside the of the home to practicing safe social distancing but to keep the social connection.

Establish routines: It is important to stick to routines. It may be helpful to schedule your day for meals, personal care and activities so that you can maintain clear expectations for your day.

Limit exposure to negative information: It is important to limit exposure to negative information/news stories as these can contribute to feelings of fear, anxiety and depressed mood.

If you feel as though you are struggling with social isolation and/or feelings of loneliness or depression, it is important to reach out to your Primary Care Physician or other medical professional to ask for help, support and resources.

COVID-19 Safety Notice:

Brown Medicine has the following measures in place to prevent the spread of coronavirus among our valued patients and staff:

- Extensive patient pre-screening to ensure they have had no contact with COVID-positive person(s), have followed social distancing policies, and are asymptomatic.
- Our waiting room is set up to support social distancing should adverse weather conditions permit waiting safely indoors.
- Patients and their guests must enter the building wearing a facemask that covers their nose and mouth at all times.
- Exam and waiting rooms are cleansed between patients, following strict CDC guidelines.
- Cleansing of high-touch surfaces, which comply with or exceed all available CDC guidelines.
- Appointments are scheduled at fewer than normal capacity, allowing for room and facility cleaning between each procedure and social distancing in the waiting areas.



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