

Alzheimer's Association Offers Tips for Discussing Cognitive Concerns with Your Doctor

Today, there are more than 6 million people 65 and older who are living with Alzheimer's dementia, with 120,000 in Wisconsin.

According to the recent Alzheimer's Association *Facts and Figures* report, too often individuals with memory concerns are not discussing the issue with their doctor — only 4 in 10 would talk to their doctor right away. Individuals hesitate because they believe their experiences are related to normal aging, rather than a potential diagnosable medical condition. Yet, 7 in 10 would want to know early if they have Alzheimer's disease if it could allow for earlier treatment.

The Alzheimer's Association offers these three tips to help individuals discuss their cognitive concerns with health professionals more confidently:

- 1. Find the right doctor.** In most cases, the first point of contact for concerns about memory and thinking is with your primary care physician. Ask your physician how comfortable they are identifying and diagnosing cognitive problems and whether there are circumstances in which he or she would refer to a specialist. Most often, your physician will perform an initial assessment, and if cognitive decline is detected, order more advanced testing or refer you to a specialist for a more definitive diagnosis. If your doctor doesn't take your concerns seriously, seek a second opinion.
- 2. Be prepared.** Come to your visit with a list of any changes in your health, including your mood, memory and behaviors. Include a list of past and current medical problems, current prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, including vitamins or supplements. Most importantly, be sure to have your list of questions and be prepared to answer the doctor's questions openly and honestly.
- 3. Get educated.** When speaking to the doctor, be sure to ask what [tests](#) will be performed, what the tests involve, how long each test takes and when the results will be available. The Alzheimer's Association offers an [interactive tour](#) of what to expect when being evaluated for memory and thinking problems on its website.

To learn more about Alzheimer's or other related dementia or resources that can help individuals and their families, visit alz.org or call the Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline at 800.272.3900.