

Diagnosing mild cognitive impairment is important, it means you can find out what may be causing the conditions and if appropriate access the right treatments, help and support.

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Diagnosing MCI and identifying the cause means you can get the right help and support.. With the correct diagnosis, you may also be able to take part in research to test new dementia treatments.

How is mild cognitive impairment diagnosed?

Your doctor is the first person to see if you are worried about your memory or thinking.

Keeping track of symptoms in a diary and bringing it with you can help when speaking to your doctor. A family member or person that supports you can help keep the diary, as there may be symptoms you do not notice.

When you visit your doctor, they should:

- ask how your symptoms are affecting you.
- if possible, talk to a loved one about how symptoms affect your daily life.
- give you a physical check-up testing movement, coordination, and reflexes.
- perform blood tests to look for vitamin deficiencies, thyroid disorders and to check overall health.
- look over your medical history and any medications you take.
- do some tests with you, to check your memory and thinking skills.

Can MCI be caused by conditions other than dementia?

Your doctor may find out that your symptoms are due to a health condition such as depression, anxiety, vitamin deficiency or thyroid problems.

If this is the case, they will be able to provide the best course of [treatment](#). These conditions are common and diagnosing them is important.

What tests do memory clinics carry out to look for mild cognitive impairment?

If other conditions have been ruled out, the doctor can refer you to a memory clinic or other specialist clinic for further tests to find out the cause of your MCI. These tests may include:

- a brain scan to look for signs of dementia.
- further thinking and memory tests.
- lumbar puncture to test spinal fluid for warning signs of Alzheimer's disease or another type of dementia.

Because mild cognitive impairment affects people differently, and has many causes, some people experience difficulties getting their symptoms diagnosed. This means it can take longer to get the right diagnosis.

Where can I find support with getting a diagnosis of MCI?

If you are struggling to get a diagnosis and are worried about your symptoms, you can speak with dementia specialist nurses on the Admiral Nurse Helpline on 0800 888 6678 or helpline@dementiauk.org

If you are diagnosed with MCI, your doctor can talk to you about the next steps. As people with MCI have a higher risk of developing dementia, you should arrange a follow-up visit to your doctor every year to see if your symptoms get worse over time.

If you notice they do get worse, you can go to the doctor as soon as possible and ask for a referral to the memory clinic for follow up tests.

