



WAI-Affiliated Dementia Diagnostic Clinic Network

In 1998, the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute (WAI) established a statewide network for memory clinics that follow WAI's best practice guidelines. These clinics use a team of dementia care experts to perform high-quality, thorough evaluations. The specially trained professionals recognize the importance of early diagnosis of memory problems and recommend treatments and services that can help patients and their families.

For a list of WAI-Affiliated Dementia Diagnostic Clinics:
www.wai.wisc.edu



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 **Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute**
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH



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Seeking Help for Memory Changes

Statewide Memory Diagnostic Clinic Network

What is dementia?

Some people may experience mild forgetfulness as they age, but serious changes in memory and thinking abilities are not typical and may signify a serious condition is causing dementia. Dementia is a general term used to describe thinking and memory issues severe enough to interfere with daily life. Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia. Other conditions can cause dementia as well, such as mild cognitive impairment (MCI), Lewy body disease, and stroke.

When to seek help

The following list describes situations that may indicate serious memory problems:

- Difficulty completing familiar tasks; for example, planning and cooking a meal, paying bills, or doing household tasks
- Confusion with time, place, or people
- New problems with words in speaking, writing, or repeating oneself
- Misplacing or hiding things
- Withdrawal from activities
- Changes in mood and personality

Source: Alzheimer's Association



Benefits of a memory evaluation

Some people are reluctant to seek a memory evaluation because they are afraid or ashamed of the changes they are experiencing. Others simply do not recognize their memory changes. However, if you are concerned about your memory or concerned about the memory of a family member, it is important to have a reliable evaluation. Not everyone who undergoes a memory evaluation has memory problems. In fact, you may learn important information about your health that can help you prevent or delay dementia in the future.

If an evaluation finds you are experiencing dementia, determining the cause will be critical for the following reasons:

- The symptoms may be treatable or reversible
- Certain treatments are more effective when started early
- Some dementia conditions may not get worse; having that information may decrease anxiety
- Understanding changes can help avoid other medical issues
- A diagnosis allows you and your family to seek education on your condition, find support services, and make informed decisions and plans about your future



What to expect during a memory clinic visit

A visit to a WAI-affiliated memory clinic will include a physical exam, review of your medical history, and tests that measure your memory, thinking, and problem-solving skills. Staff will ask you questions about your medications, sleep health, mood, and ability to perform daily tasks. A doctor may ask you to undergo brain imaging scans and blood tests. It is helpful if a friend or family member who knows you well can accompany you to your memory clinic visit.

After your assessment, memory clinic staff will explain the results either immediately after your appointment or during a follow-up visit. Based on your diagnosis, clinic staff will review options for treatment, including medications or healthy lifestyle recommendations. The clinic staff will also supply you with information about community support services for patients and families living with dementia and offer recommendations for maintaining independence.