

Medical Evaluation of Memory Loss



The first step in getting help for a memory problem is to have a thorough medical evaluation. Treatable conditions that affect memory can be found during such evaluations, and if such a condition is identified, treatment can begin immediately. These conditions include depression and the side effects of certain prescription drugs.

A Memory Evaluation May Include:

- A thorough history and examination
- Laboratory tests to find hidden causes of memory loss
- ***A brain*** imaging study (a “CAT” or “CT” scan, or an “MRI” scan)

Is an Important Memory Disorder Present?

The evaluation will test the functioning of the mind in a number of areas. This will help the doctor establish the importance of the memory changes. Sometimes, in early memory loss, more extensive testing is needed. This extensive testing is performed by neuropsychologists.

Can the Memory Problem Be Improved?

Medical evaluation and testing may find conditions or medicines that affect memory. If these are the cause of the memory changes, the doctor will suggest ways to correct the condition or changes in medication to avoid side effects.

What Is the Cause of the Memory Problem?

More than 100 different diseases can cause serious memory loss. However, only a few of them account for more than 90% of all cases of dementia. The doctor will gather enough information to identify the most likely cause of the person’s memory problem.

The doctor will also determine what other evaluations or professionals are likely to be of help. A neurologist or psychiatrist may be able to help determine the cause of a memory disorder.

