



Healthy Brain Checklist™

Name _____

Date _____

1. Do you require assistance remembering appointments, family occasions, holidays or taking medications?

Yes

No

2. Check each symptom with which you are having *increasing difficulty*, compared to your past ability:

Symptoms of Medical Conditions	Symptoms of Normal Aging
<input type="checkbox"/> Forgetting <u>important details</u> of things I have done in the past few weeks.	<input type="checkbox"/> Forgetting the name of someone I know well.
<input type="checkbox"/> Completely forgetting to do things I said I would do.	<input type="checkbox"/> Forgetting what I was going to say in a conversation.
<input type="checkbox"/> Forgetting recent events or conversations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Forgetting what I was going to do when going into another room.
<input type="checkbox"/> Retelling a story or joke to the same person because I forgot that I had already told them.	<input type="checkbox"/> Finding things I have recently put down.
<input type="checkbox"/> Completing complex tasks at work or home (i.e. balancing check books, planning projects).	<input type="checkbox"/> Recalling a specific word I want.

3. Check each feeling that applies: “During the last month I have”:

- Felt that I cannot stop feeling “down” or “blue”, even with help from family or friends.
- Felt all pleasure and joy has gone from life.
- Felt hopeless about the future.
- Felt that everything was an effort.
- Felt low in energy or slowed down a lot.

Please note any other memory or mood-related concerns to discuss the your doctor:

Due to rising awareness about progressive memory disorders like Alzheimer’s disease, the public is increasingly expressing concerns about perceived memory loss. This has led to an increasing number of diagnostic tests performed on healthy patients with *benign* concerns. At the same time, research has shown that most early symptoms of cognitive decline, or *qualified* concerns, are overlooked in primary care settings. Physicians can provide better care if they are vigilant against such emerging problems.

The Purpose of the Healthy Brain Checklist

This Questionnaire will help physicians distinguish between QUALIFIED memory concerns that require further evaluation, and BENIGN memory concerns that are consistent with normal aging.

Which Patients Should Complete the Healthy Brain Checklist?

All patients aged 50 and older should complete this questionnaire at each physician visit, regardless of the purpose of their visit.

How to Interpret Responses to the Healthy Brain Checklist

- **Question 1:** Requiring assistance with these tasks suggests an advanced level of impairment, so patients who respond “YES” to Question 1, are expressing a QUALIFIED concern. These patients are likely to have an underlying medical condition that is impairing their cognition so further evaluation is recommended.
- **Question 2:** Increasing difficulties with tasks that correlate to underlying medical conditions (left column), indicate QUALIFIED concerns that should be further evaluated. Increasing difficulties with tasks that correlate to normal aging (right column), indicate BENIGN concerns. By themselves, BENIGN concerns do not warrant further evaluation, unless the physician clinically suspects cognitive impairment or depression.
- **Question 3:** These are common indicators of major depressive disorder, which could also interfere with memory and other cognitive abilities. Patients who indicate any of these symptoms should be evaluated for depression.

Recommended Next Steps

- Patients who are aging normally and expressed only BENIGN concerns (or no concerns), should be encouraged to monitor their cognitive health, and should be prompted to express any concerns at follow-up visits.
- Patients who expressed QUALIFIED concerns should undergo an objective assessment of their cognition. As described more fully in the Orange County Vital Aging – Physician Guidelines*, this can be completed in your office using the MCI Screen, or by referring the patient to appropriate medical resources in the community. The MCI Screen may be evaluated for free at www.mccare.com.
- All patients should be made aware of manageable risk factors that affect cognitive health, as well as the free educational resources offered at: www.OCVitalAging.org

*Download guidelines at: OCVitalAging.org/physician