



6 tips for talking about brain health across the lifespan

Dementia is a spectrum. Prevention and early detection start in primary care. Your role includes normalizing aging changes, identifying early concerns, managing chronic disease and connecting patients to support.

1 Normalize aging. But don't dismiss it

- Normal aging
- Mild cognitive impairment (MCI)
- Dementia

YOUR ROLE:

- Identify
- Evaluate
- Treat when possible
- Support patients and caregivers

2 Recognize two common patient profiles

- The Proactive, Healthy Older Adult

YOUR APPROACH:

Tie chronic disease management to brain health

- The Medically Complex Patient

YOUR APPROACH:

Focus on support systems, caregiver engagement and community linkage

3 Take action when concerns are raised

- If the patient brings up a concern, it's often more serious than they realize.
- If caregivers bring up a concern, the patient may lack insight or their judgment may already be affected.

YOUR JOB:

- Gather collateral history
- Screen for cognitive impairment
- Initiate workup or referral

4 Use the resources in your toolbox

→ Quick screen

- Mini-Cog (2–3 minutes)
- AD8 (2–3 minutes)

→ Guidance tools

- AAFP shared decision-making guidance tool

→ Patient/caregiver resources

familydoctor.org

5 Integrate brain health into chronic disease management

→ Reinforce at every visit:

- Control hypertension
- Manage diabetes
- Address hyperlipidemia
- Treat depression
- Encourage physical activity
- Reduce smoking and alcohol use

6 Reduce fear and stigma

→ Normalize evaluation. Emphasize support.

- Early detection supports autonomy
- Treatment options are evolving
- Research and clinical trials continue advancing care
- Normalize cognitive evaluation as part of routine health care (emphasize support, not stigma)

Primary care is central to brain health.

Normalizing early brain health conversations reduces stigma, advances prevention and meaningfully improves outcomes across the dementia spectrum.