



## Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

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Completing a targeted medical evaluation with individuals that have findings on standardized cognitive screening is an important next step. The Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute offers these tips for primary care providers in completing such a medical evaluation.

### Best practices when medically working up a patient's memory concerns

- ✓ Review prescriptions and over-the-counter products to identify those that could affect cognition (e.g., allergy medicines, sleeping medicines, medications for urinary incontinence, etc.)
- ✓ Screen for obstructive sleep apnea (e.g., snoring, excessive daytime sleepiness, etc.) and other sleep disorders
- ✓ Ask about depression symptoms, which can affect sleep and reduce concentration
- ✓ Screen for stroke symptoms
- ✓ Review vascular risk factors
- ✓ Query about tremors, falls, incontinence, dysphagia, prior serious head injuries, and alcohol and drug use
- ✓ Review changes in daily function that are attributable to cognitive decline (e.g., managing finances, keeping appointments, etc.)
- ✓ Complete targeted neurological and cardiovascular exams
- ✓ Check basic lab tests: vitamin B12, TSH, 25-OH vitamin D, CBC, basic metabolic profile, liver enzymes, and HIV

### When to refer to a memory clinic

From the above work-up, referring to a dementia specialist may be prudent if the patient:

- ✓ Is <65 years old
- ✓ Has tremors, falls, hallucinations, or ataxia
- ✓ Has numerous confounding factors
- ✓ Has an atypical presentation
- ✓ Has difficult behavioral symptoms
- ✓ Has functional impairment out of proportion to cognitive screening test score

Unfortunately, more than 50% of people with dementia are not diagnosed, yet early detection can make a big difference in helping protect brain function and with ongoing chronic disease management. In addition, there are many community resources to help patients, families, and primary care clinicians access the quality cognitive care they need. Your local Aging and Disability Resource Center is a great place to start to make those connections.

*Suggestions provided by Cynthia Carlsson, MD, MS, professor of medicine, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health*