Factsheet: Mild Cognitive Impairment

What is mild cognitive impairment (MCI)?

- MCI is a condition in which a person notices problems with memory, language, or other cognitive (thinking) abilities. These problems typically do not interfere with daily life.
- In some cases, MCI may be a very early stage of Alzheimer’s disease or another dementia.
- A diagnosis of MCI can be made after a memory evaluation. The evaluation includes a complete medical history interview and paper and pencil tests of cognitive abilities.

How likely is it that a person diagnosed with MCI will develop dementia?

- People with MCI are more likely than those without MCI to develop Alzheimer’s disease or another dementia within their lifetime.
- For example, approximately one out of ten people diagnosed with MCI show a greater decline in cognitive abilities within one year of their diagnosis.

Does everyone with MCI eventually develop dementia?

- No, not everyone with MCI will develop Alzheimer’s disease or dementia.
- One out of five people diagnosed with MCI will go back to normal cognitive functioning within three or four years of their MCI diagnosis.
- Many people with MCI remain stable for several years without progressing to Alzheimer’s disease or dementia.

What causes MCI?

- There is no known cause of MCI; however, risk factors include:
  - High blood pressure
  - Diabetes
  - Low levels of physical, social, and mental activity
- Good ways to maintain brain health include:
  - Good medical management of heart disease (such as high blood pressure and diabetes)
  - Regular exercise
  - Increased social and mental activity

Source: Alzheimer’s Society