



THE TADDLER

Understanding Age-Related Memory Changes

By: Vicki McGregor, Registered Nurse

As we age, it's common to notice some changes in our memory and to wonder what's normal and what's not. Almost 40% of us will experience some form of memory loss after we turn 65 years old.¹

Normal Aging and the Brain

Mild, subtle shifts in memory and thinking speed are a normal part of aging and don't interfere with daily activities or independence. Occasionally, you may struggle to find words, or you may forget names or where you left your keys. You might take a bit longer to learn something new and undertaking complex tasks like doing your taxes might take more time than before.

Friends and family usually don't see anything concerning when this happens and it's possible that some people may not even notice these subtle changes in cognition (memory and thinking processes) in themselves.

When It's More Than Normal: Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)

Sometimes, changes in cognition go beyond what's expected with normal aging. This is known as Mild Cognitive Impairment, or MCI. It's a condition that falls between normal aging and dementia.

People with MCI may experience more consistent lapses in memory, language, planning, organizing, and decision-making, but can still take care of themselves and do their normal daily activities. These cognitive changes are usually most noticed by the person affected and people who are close to them may also notice a difference.

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Image from News in Health's *Things Forgotten* article, <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2010/02/things-forgotten>

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Someone with MCI might frequently forget to take medications, miss appointments, repeat themselves, or have increasing difficulty managing finances or preparing complex meals. They may have trouble recalling recent events, finding the right words, or recalling names of distant friends or acquaintances. Some may develop difficulty driving in unfamiliar environments.

MCI is more common as people age. Based on a meta-analysis, the American Academy of Neurology estimated that 6.7% of 60 to 74-year olds and 25.2% of 80 to 84-year olds were affected by MCI.²

MCI has many possible causes, such as reduced blood flow to the brain from blocked blood vessels, head injuries, certain medications, and more. Some causes may be reversible, so early medical evaluation is important.

Dementia: When Daily Life is Disrupted

In contrast to MCI, dementia is a significant decline in cognition that disrupts daily life. People with dementia may forget things within minutes or hours and may need help with basic daily tasks like cooking, dressing, managing finances, or going places. They may forget important people or events, have unpredictable changes in mood and behaviour, have difficulty finding words, repeat the same questions or stories, or become lost in familiar places.

The World Health Organization estimates that after we turn 60 years old, 5 to 8% of us will live with dementia at some point.¹

If you or a loved one notice consistent changes in cognition, please book an appointment to discuss it with your primary care provider so you can get the support you need.

References

1. Alzheimer's Society of Canada website accessed on Sept 19, 2025 at <https://admin.alzheimer.ca/en/about-dementia/do-i-have-dementia/differences-between-normal-aging-dementia>
2. Petersen, Ronald. (Aug 2025). Mild Cognitive Impairment: Epidemiology, pathology, and clinical assessment. Accessed on Uptodate.

Resources:

Is it normal aging or mild cognitive impairment (MCI)? article: <https://www.mcmasteroptimalaging.org/blog/detail/videos/2025/04/23/is-it-normal-aging-or-mild-cognitive-impairment>

Mild cognitive impairment vs dementia e-learning: <https://www.mcmasteroptimalaging.org/e-learning/dementia>

Video about dementia: <https://www.mcmasteroptimalaging.org/blog/detail/videos/2024/10/09/dementia--what-you-need-to-know>

Baycrest Memory and Aging Program: <https://www.baycrest.org/Baycrest/Healthcare-Programs-Services/Clinical-Services/Neuropsychology-Cognitive-Health/Neuropsychology-Treatment-Programs/Memory-Aging-Program>

Cogniciti Brain Health Workshops: <https://cogniciti.com/Get-Involved/Brain-Health-Workshops>



Mental Health Corner

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities

By: Hannah Levitt, Masters of Social Work Student and the Taddler Editorial Team

Imagine transforming our neighbourhoods into spaces where aging is not only supported but valued and celebrated. Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) offer just this: a thoughtful, community-driven way to support aging at home. A NORC is usually classified as a specific building or area (such as an apartment complex or co-op) where there is a higher number of older residents (e.g., 30% or more over 65).

The NORC model encourages natural connections and mutual aid by building on existing structures or increasing resources. Specifically, once a building qualifies, the University Health Network (UHN) NORC Innovation Centre works with residents to figure out what supports and services they want and need, then brings those services into the buildings. These might include health care and social supports (e.g., Nurse Practitioners, Occupational Therapists, social programs, etc.) (Social Commons, 2024).

An example of a NORC is Stanley Knowles Co-op in midtown Toronto. At Stanley Knowles, NORC programming includes: social events (e.g., group socials), monthly check-ins, visits by paramedics, vaccine clinics, occupational therapy, falls risk assessments, help with mobility aids, and more. (Social Commons, 2024).



Photo by Gert Stockmans on Unsplash

Recent years have seen local initiatives adopt the NORC approach in response to the rising number of older adults living independently or choosing to age at home. In 2015, the UHN created the NORC Innovation Centre to help with the development and management of NORC programs in Toronto (UHN, 2023). As of 2024, there were 489 recognized NORC-style buildings in Toronto (UHN, 2024). This program has been researching and exploring ways to develop more NORC-style buildings across Toronto (UHN, 2023). One of their latest initiatives is the Do-It-Yourself NORC guide, an accessible online resource designed for community members to apply NORC-style support in their buildings by offering tips, strategies, and resources to get started. You can learn more about it here: <https://norcambassadors.ca/diy/>.

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Whether you're a homeowner, a tenant, or a community member, we all play a vital role in shaping how our communities age. The NORC approach to aging helps cultivate communities grounded in the places people already call home, while building in supports needed as our population continues to grow.



Photo by Vlad Sargu on Unsplash

References

1. NORC Ambassadors. (2021). Do-it-yourself NORC (DIY NORC). <https://norcambassadors.ca/diy/>
2. Social Commons. (2024). You don't have to move into a nursing home. NORCS area. Better way. <https://socialcommons.ca/2024/03/14/you-dont-have-to-move-into-a-nursing-home-theres-a-better-way/>
3. University Health Network. (2023, June 8). UHN report sees chance to create home care capacity by streamlining services in NORCs. UHN Foundation. <https://uhnfoundation.ca/stories/uhn-report-sees-chance-to-create-home-care-capacity-by-streamlining-services-in-norcs/>
4. University Health Network. (2023). Naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs). [UHN OpenLab. https://uhnopenlab.ca/our-work/norcs/](https://uhnopenlab.ca/our-work/norcs/)

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT TADDLE CREEK

By: Cheryl Dobinson, Executive Director

This column provides information about Taddle Creek Family Health Team (TC FHT) events, program updates and announcements.

AFHTO (Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario) Conference

On October 23-24, 2025, nine members of TC FHT attended the annual AFHTO (Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario) held in Toronto. We joined over 600 other participants from Family Health Teams across the province and took part in a wide range of sessions on topics including trauma-informed care, ethical governance, Indigenous cultural safety, caregiver support, AI in primary care, leadership and advocacy, quality improvement, and much more. The conference provided opportunities for networking and learning from peers, and we came back with new ideas and fresh perspectives to bring to our work. There was also a photo booth at the event so we took the opportunity to take a fun group pic!



Mental Health Program Assertiveness Skills Training Workshops

Due to popular demand, the Mental Health Program has offered numerous in-person workshops between May – November 2025 for patients on the topic of Assertiveness Skills Training. These workshops aim to support participants in increasing their effective communication of feelings, wants, and needs while maintaining respect for self and others. Participants have noted that they appreciated the inclusion of research-based tools, the opportunity to reflect, share, and discuss topics, and being able to learn from facilitators and each other.

Bottom left up and around to bottom right: Tania Ng (Pharmacist), Nadifa Mohamed (Administrative Assistant), Andrea Filip (Physician Assistant), Vicki McGregor (Registered Nurse), Suman Rajkarnikar (Financial Controller), Yasene Mawji (Social Worker), Victoria Charko (Registered Nurse), Melanie Yeung (Registered Dietitian, Diabetes Education Program), Cheryl Dobinson (Executive Director)

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Mental Health Program Senior's Workshops

Our Mental Health Program has been offering in-person workshops for seniors on a monthly basis since July 2025. The workshops provide a space for seniors to connect with each other, share experiences, and learn about available resources. The specific topics of each workshop are decided by the participants attending, and common themes include healthy aging, building connections in the community, managing grief, and life after retirement.

Mental Health Webinar: Self-Advocating in Health Care – August 19, 2025

Our Mental Health Program offered a webinar on “Self-Advocating in Health Care” focusing on understanding the importance of self-advocacy, reviewing structural limitations in our health-care system, and examining effectiveness of various communication styles. The webinar also addressed self-advocacy tools, tips and strategies, providing over 80 participants with resources to support them in advocating around their own health. The webinar recording and resources are available on our website at: <https://taddlecreekfht.ca/mental-health-webinar-august-2025/>

Personnel Updates

Marlie Standen, Lead Social Worker, resigned effective October 17, 2025.

Sarah Wash, who has been a Social Worker here since May 2023, has taken over the Lead Social Worker position.

Nancy Guerrero, Social Worker, joined our team on October 14, 2025. Nancy is an experienced Social Worker who has worked as a VAW Counsellor at Family Service Toronto, in various roles with Seaton House, and as a Shelter Support Worker for 10 years at Red Door Family and VAW Shelters. She has also worked in private practice as well as completing student practicums with the CAMH Emergency Department and Borden Street Clinic.

Taddle Creek

DIABETES
DIGEST

Diabetes and Special Occasions

By: Amanda Gracia, Dietetic Intern

Special occasions, such as birthdays, anniversaries, milestones, and holiday celebrations are moments in life that many people treasure. Living with diabetes can change how you experience and enjoy these moments. Of course it doesn't mean you can't celebrate, it just means you might celebrate differently.

Feelings and Fears

Guilt and loneliness can sometimes feel like uninvited guests at the party. If you say no to that slice of cake a loved one made just for you, you may risk hurting their feelings; if you say yes, you might spike your blood sugar. It's a tough balance, and feeling conflicted or isolated are completely valid responses. You're not alone in this emotional juggling act and it can be helpful to think about ways to navigate the challenges that can arise around celebrations.



How to Navigate Special Occasions

- **Plan ahead**

Ask about the menu in advance (1, 2). If you're dining out, check the restaurant's website for nutrition information, or call ahead to ask. If you're attending a party, you could reach out to the host to ask about the menu. When you know what to expect, it's easier to prepare a backup plan just in case.

- **Balance your plate**

Include protein with your carbs — yes, even when you're having cake. Eating a balanced meal before dessert helps manage blood sugar and may support you in eating the amount of sweets that is right for you (3).

- **Watch the timing**

Celebrations don't always run on schedule. Meals may be delayed, and excitement can distract from hunger cues (1). Stick to regular mealtimes when possible and if things are uncertain, bring a balanced snack (2). If you're on insulin, time your carbohydrate intake accordingly.

- **Consider activity levels**

Some occasions might involve more movement, such as dancing at a wedding or chasing trick-or-treating kids around. If you're more active than usual, you may need extra carbohydrates (1). Be ready to adjust as needed.

- **Alcohol in moderation**

It is recommended to have no more than two alcoholic drinks per occasion, and to space them out with non-alcoholic beverages (4). This helps reduce health risks and keeps you in control. Also make sure to eat while drinking!

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You're Not Alone

Celebrating with diabetes doesn't mean going it alone. Lean on your support system. Talk with friends and family about what you need — maybe it's a reminder to check your blood sugar, someone to bring a low-sugar option, or simply a little understanding (2). Everyone's needs are different, so share yours openly.

Life does change with a diabetes diagnosis, but it doesn't lose its colour, joy, or meaning. You can still enjoy cake on your birthday, savour Halloween candy, and dance the night away. The key is celebrating mindfully, not perfectly. Special occasions are still yours to cherish.

References

1. AboutKidsHealth. (n.d.). Eating out and special occasions when a family member has diabetes. The Hospital for Sick Children. <https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/fr/sorties-au-restaurant-et-occasions-speciales?language=en>
2. Diabetes Research Connection. (2023, December 12). Navigating social situations and holidays with diabetes. <https://diabetesresearchconnection.org/navigating-social-situations-and-holidays-with-diabetes/>
3. OneTouch Canada. (n.d.). Celebrating special occasions. <https://www.onetouch.ca/diabetes-resources/enjoying-life/celebrating-special-occasions>
4. Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. (2023, January). Canada's guidance on alcohol and health: Final report. <https://ccsa.ca/en/guidance-tools-resources/substance-use-and-addiction/alcohol/canadas-guidance-alcohol-and-health>

SUITE 522 COMES DOWN WITH BLUE JAYS FEVER!



L to R (back): Dr. Megan Mills, Dr. Alissia Valentinis, Melody Pangan (admin), Victoria Charko RN
L to R (front): Dr. Kristy Armstrong, Dr. Jessica Yu, Dr. Christina Biancucci, Tania Ng (pharmacist)

Taddler Tips

This is a reminder that Taddle Creek Family Health Team has a website: <https://taddlecreekfht.ca/home/>

Here are some features we would like to highlight for you on the website.

On our website homepage, you will find:

- The time and location of after-hours clinics, and healthcare services offered outside of our regular office hours
- Staff directory with contact information for different staff members and our office locations
- Taddle Creek news and list of upcoming events

Under the 'Programs and Services' heading are all of the different programs offered by TC FHT:

- Diabetes Education Program
- Nutrition and Heart Health Program
- Mental Health Program
- Respiratory Care Program

Be sure to check the links and downloads sections found at the bottom of the page of each program for handouts, webinars, and other helpful information.

Please note that we are in the process of updating some of the resources in the Healthcare Resources section to make them more current.

THE TADDLER

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DISCLAIMER

The information presented in The Taddler is for educational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for the professional advice, treatment or diagnosis from your health care provider. Contact your physician, nurse practitioner or other qualified health care professional if you have any questions or concerns about your health.

The purpose of the TC FHT Newsletter, "The Taddler" is to provide:

1. Education on varied health-related topics
2. Regular communication about what is happening at TC FHT
3. Information on issues that impact TC FHT and its patients
4. A means for patients to get acquainted with TC FHT team members

We hope you enjoy reading it!

**The Taddler is not for private marketing purposes*

Taddle Creek Family Health Team

Fall - Winter 2025/26 Groups/Workshops/Drop-In Offerings

Groups/Clinics are open to Taddle Creek Family Health Team patients
 Additional information is available on the Programs and Services drop down menu,
 see website: <https://taddlecreekfht.ca/>
 Dates are subject to change

Event	Date(s)	Time	Learn About/Assistance With
Mental Health Program			
Assertiveness Workshop In-person Note: The waitlist is currently closed and will re-open in February. Please check our website for updates: https://taddlecreekfht.ca/programs/mental-health/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 8, 2026 February 19, 2026 	1:00 pm - 4:30 pm	The assertiveness workshop is an educational group to provide information and strategies to help individuals better understand and develop techniques for assertive communication. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand how to define assertiveness Learn about the spectrum between passive to aggressive communication Explore the importance of boundaries and why they are valid Learn tools for building assertive communication skills
CBT-Insomnia Group Virtual Note: Referral from your primary care provider is required to enroll	January 28, 2026 - March 4, 2026 6 weeks long	Wednesdays 10:30 am - 12:30 pm	The CBT-Insomnia group provides behavioural and cognitive strategies to help treat insomnia, improve your sleep quality and promote good physical and mental health Participants may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain an understanding of the physiological systems that regulate sleep Learn about relaxation techniques to reduce stress and help you get to sleep Use sleep diaries to monitor progress
Resourced and Resilient Group In-Person Note: Referral from your primary care provider is required to enroll	February 11, 2026 - April 1, 2026 8 weeks long	Wednesdays 2:00 - 4:00 pm	The Resourced and Resilient Group is an 8-week group therapy program for adults who have experienced childhood, interpersonal trauma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn different models, skills, and strategies that could support you in recovering from the long-term impacts of childhood trauma This group was developed by Women's College Hospital. Facilitators have received supervision and training from the creators of the group's content

Event	Date(s)	Time	Learn About/Assistance With
Diabetes Education Program			
Blood Sugar Management Workshop	December 3, 2025 (Part 1) December 10, 2025 (Part 2)	Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:00 am 9:00 - 11:00 am	An introductory two-part series designed to help individuals living with prediabetes or diabetes. Workshops will be held over Zoom.
Virtual	December 4, 2025 (Part 1) December 11, 2025 (Part 2)	Thursdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm 5:00 - 7:00 pm	Part 1: Getting Started <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is diabetes? • What causes diabetes? • How is prediabetes/diabetes diagnosed? • How do I prevent long term complications related to diabetes? • Is diabetes reversible?
Eligibility Criteria: Must have Prediabetes or Diabetes and be referred to the diabetes education program by your primary care provider	January 21, 2026 (Part 1) January 28, 2026 (Part 2)	Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:00 am 9:00 - 11:00 am	Part 2: Taking Charge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I manage my blood sugars? • What can I eat when I have prediabetes/diabetes? • Can exercise help with prediabetes/diabetes? • How does stress impact my prediabetes/diabetes?
	January 22, 2026 (Part 1) January 29, 2026 (Part 2)	Thursdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm 5:00 - 7:00 pm	
	February 11, 2026 (Part 1) February 18, 2026 (Part 2)	Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:00 am 9:00 - 11:00 am	
	February 19, 2026 (Part 1) February 26, 2026 (Part 2)	Thursdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm 5:00 - 7:00 pm	
Nutrition Program			
Mindful Nutrition Group	February 11, 2026 - March 25, 2026	Wednesdays 5:30 - 7:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in mindful eating practices • Build a healthier relationship with food and your body • Adoption of intuitive eating principles • Decrease in emotional eating episodes
Virtual	7 weeks long		
Note: Call 416-260-1315 ext 0 to register for the group			