• Determining whether a person’s symptoms represent normal aging or dementia can only be done by a doctor (such as a neuropsychologist)

• As our bodies age, so do our brains. As a result, there are many changes that are a very normal part of the aging process:
  o Occasionally misplacing an item
  o Feeling as though your brain has slowed down
  o Needing to rely on written notes

• When Should I Worry?
  o See your doctor if you are worried
  o Many conditions can cause problems with memory and other thinking skills
  o Some potential signs of problems include:
    ▪ Getting lost in familiar places
    ▪ Repetitive questioning
    ▪ Odd or inappropriate behavior
    ▪ Forgetting recent events
    ▪ Personality changes
    ▪ Problems with motivation
    ▪ Decline in planning or organization

• Seeing a Neuropsychologist
  o This person can determine whether the problems are related to normal aging or something more
  o This is done in the context of YOU – your medical and personal history

• What is Dementia?
  o Dementia is NOT Alzheimer’s disease
  o It is a syndrome that may be degenerative or may be more stable
  o Can be caused by many conditions
  o Workup with a doctor is needed to make this diagnosis
• How Can I Try to Prevent Dementia?
  o Physical Activity
    ▪ Heart health impacts brain healthy
    ▪ Talk to your doctor first
    ▪ Moderate aerobic activity, such as a brisk walk or using a hand bicycle, is the goal
    ▪ 30 – 40 minutes per session, at least 3 times per week
    ▪ Tai Chi, yoga, and strength training are also recommended
  o Social Activity
    ▪ Spend time with friends and family
    ▪ Get and give support
  o Cognitive Activity
    ▪ Use your brain!
    ▪ TV does not count
    ▪ Challenge yourself
      • Learn something new
      • Play games (including Sudoku or crossword puzzles)
      • Calculate tips in your mind
  o Healthy Eating
    ▪ Mediterranean and MIND diets have been studied the most
    ▪ Focus on more fresh foods, close to their original form
    ▪ Eat fewer processed foods
    ▪ Increase fruits and vegetables
    ▪ Foods rich in antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids are good
    ▪ Use spices, especially turmeric, ginger, and cinnamon
  o Sleep
    ▪ Aim for 7-9 hours per night
    ▪ Develop good sleep hygiene:
      • Consistent bedtime and wake times
      • No TV, reading, fighting, or eating in bed
      • Avoid screens for at least 30 minutes before bed