

## Things to look for in a doctor

- ✓ One who takes the time to listen to you.
- ✓ One who explains the diagnosis and the risks and benefits of medications.
- ✓ One who is available between scheduled appointments. When you call, they call back and address your concerns.
- ✓ One who has additional staff who can help you navigate the many issues that arise related to the disease. Are there nurses who help you get connected with resources? Are there social workers who can provide counseling, education and support?
- ✓ One who accepts your loved one's insurance.



## WE CARE

If you feel rushed, unheard and leave the office with more questions than when you walked in, it may be time to look for another doctor. Rest assured that there are medical professionals who can provide the support you need in dealing with memory disorders. For further assistance in locating who may be a good option for your situation, please call the Care2Caregivers Helpline for free, confidential assistance. When you care, we are there.



WHEN YOU CARE • WE ARE THERE

### For more information:

Comprehensive Services on Aging (COPSA) has been providing compassionate and sensitive mental health care to the elderly since 1975. A team of Geriatric Psychiatrists, Social Workers and Case Managers are available to assist families with diagnosis and treatment. COPSA also provides training for professionals, family caregivers and the community on issues related to aging, memory and mental health. Care2Caregivers provides resources, referrals, information and supportive counseling to anyone caring for someone with memory loss. Call for help.

**HELPLINE: 800.424.2494**  
**[www.Care2Caregivers.com](http://www.Care2Caregivers.com)**

# RUTGERS HEALTH

University Behavioral Health Care  
COPSA Institute for Alzheimer's Disease & Related Disorders

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**WHAT TYPE  
OF DOCTOR  
DO YOU NEED?**

If you're concerned about your memory or the memory of someone you love, a range of professionals is available to assist you with diagnosis and care.

A good first step is to check in with your **Primary Care Physician** or **Doctor (PCP)** so they can do a thorough exam and order updated lab work. Make notes at home and bring them to the appointment so you can tell your doctor about any symptoms you've noticed. Different primary care doctors have varying comfort levels in diagnosing diseases that cause memory loss, and prescribing medications that may improve symptoms. Some primary care doctors may have had extra training in dealing with these issues. Others have not had this special training and may be less aware of specific considerations regarding certain common medications prescribed for issues related to sleep, anxiety and depression. Common medications that may be given to a younger person may negatively impact an older person, especially one with memory issues. Your doctor should be happy to refer you to a specialist for further evaluation. If you end up consulting a specialist, you will need to provide records from your primary care doctor along with your updated lab results.



## Which specialist is best for me?

A **Geriatrician** is a doctor who specializes in caring for older adults. They will have special training in diseases impacting the elderly and will be proficient in suggesting medications and treatments that are safest and provide the best quality of life. A Geriatrician is an excellent choice to oversee care.

A **Geriatric Psychiatrist** is a doctor with special training in the diagnosis and treatment of mental health disorders that may occur in older adults. Geriatric Psychiatrists have extensive knowledge about diseases that cause memory loss such as Alzheimer's Disease, in addition to issues such as anxiety and depression. These doctors are skilled in prescribing medications that may be helpful to reduce problematic symptoms while still overseeing the health and well-being of the senior. Geriatric Psychiatrists often work in collaboration with social workers and nurses who can help provide comprehensive care to greatly improve a person's quality of life.

A **Neurologist** is a doctor who focuses on treating diseases of the nervous system including the brain, spinal cord, nerves and muscles. Some of these diseases include Epilepsy, Multiple Sclerosis, Brain Trauma or Tumors, Parkinson's Disease, Strokes, or

Alzheimer's Disease. A Neurologist is an excellent choice especially when the disease impacts a person's motor abilities, like Parkinson's Disease.

A **Neuropsychologist** specializes in understanding the relationship between the physical brain and behavior. They have a PhD or PsyD in psychology, as opposed to Physician who is a Doctor of Medicine. Oftentimes, a Geriatrician, Geriatric Psychiatrist, or Neurologist may refer a patient they are evaluating to a Neuropsychologist for neuropsychological testing.

## What doctor is best for me?

A **primary doctor** who can oversee all of your care is essential. **Geriatricians** are excellent options. If your loved one with memory impairment has significant behavioral issues such as depression, anxiety, combativeness, sleep disturbance, or obsessive compulsive behaviors, a **Geriatric Psychiatric** would be a good supplement. These doctors will collaborate with each other to give the patient the best support possible. If your loved one with memory loss has motor issues such as those present with Parkinson's Disease, a **Neurologist** would be an excellent doctor to consult. Doctors rely on each other to treat complex diseases in ways that give their shared patient the best quality of life.

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[www.COPSAInstitute.com](http://www.COPSAInstitute.com)