

Is it time for your brain to panic yet?

I once had a roommate who came home one day and put the milk on the dresser and her sunglasses in the refrigerator. At the time we were both in our 20's so there was no cause for alarm. We laughed off such silly things to our dual lives of working by day and partying by night.

If I found myself or any of my friends, doing something like this today, the first thought would be “... **pay attention this might be a sign of early dementia or Alzheimer's.**”

It's funny that as we age, our thoughts go into panic mode more easily. Rather than consider the possibility our stressful lives have us trying to remember so many things, that a memory slip is not an unusual casualty, we suspect dementia and Alzheimer's. Of course, if you have experienced friends or family debilitated by dementia or Alzheimer's, the thought may not be very far from your own mind that it might happen to you as well.

Adding to the panic, is the media hype on the release of a recent British study of over 7,000 male and female civil servants who were tested for cognitive abilities three times over a 10 year period. The study did not prove a link between mental decline and dementia. However, it did indicate measurable changes in math and verbal skills starting to decline every so slightly starting at age 45 and increasing to a 10% decline by ages 60-70.

Finding a decline as early as age 45 when previously it was not expected until age 60, has researchers suggesting earlier interventions to delay later mental decline. Of special concern are high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes which are known links to dementia and Alzheimer's.

What does this mean for women?

- Currently 2/3's of the dementia population are women according to

both British and US reports.

- Of those over age 65 with Alzheimer's, 3.4 million are women and 1.8 million men.
- By age 71 sixteen percent of women will be diagnosed with some form of dementia as compared to eleven percent of men.
- The higher incidence of women with dementia is indicative of living longer rather than a gender tendency.

If you are no longer in your 20's and you find yourself doing something strange like putting the milk on the dresser and your sunglasses in the refrigerator, it's time to stop. Take some time for yourself, relax and de-stress. Then, consider that you have a very good chance of living longer than you expect.

Now is a good time, not to panic but to start taking care of your brain for the long run.