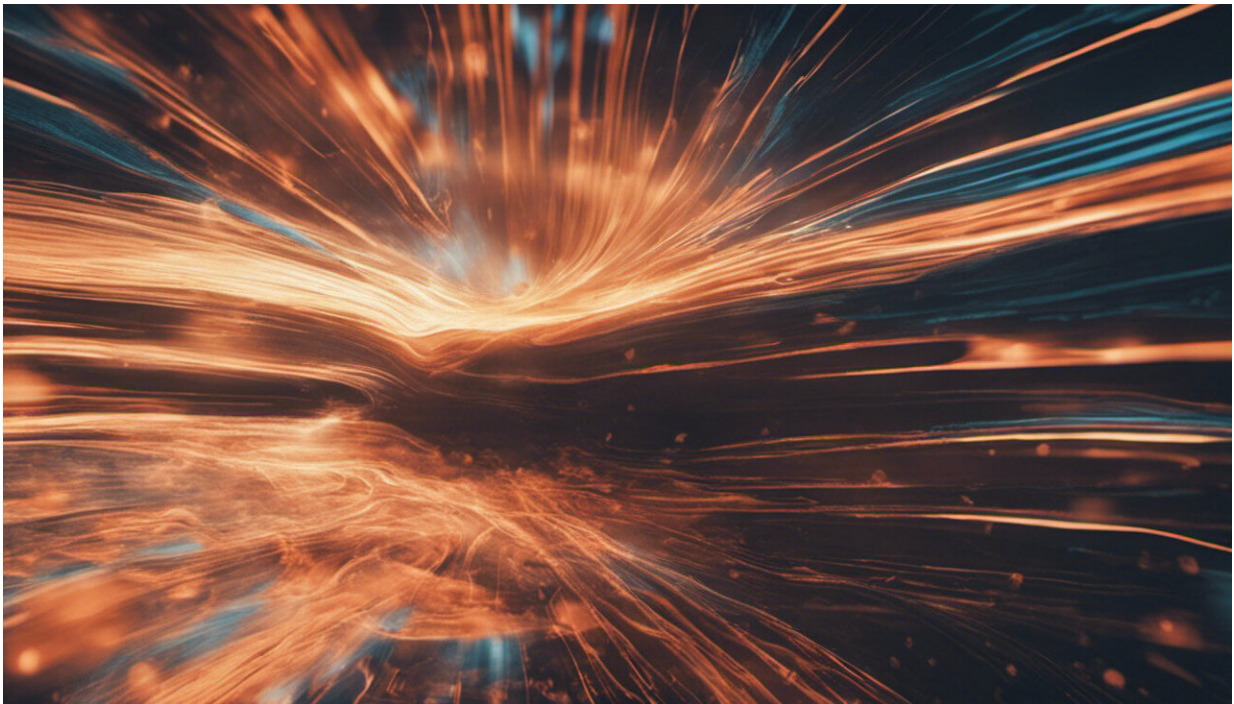


When 'senior moments' become something to worry about

January 7 2011, By Keith Herrell



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

(PhysOrg.com) -- It happens to all of us: You know you walked into a room for a reason, but you forget what it was. Or you see someone you're acquainted with, but you can't come up with her name.

These are sometimes called "senior moments," because they appear to

happen more and more as we age. But are they something to simply laugh off, or do they herald something more troubling on the horizon, such as Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia?

"As we get older, there are very subtle or mild changes that occur in our [memory](#) function and overall cognitive performance," says Brendan Kelley, MD, a UC Health neurologist and Endowed Chair in Alzheimer's Disease Research and Education in the neurology department at the University of Cincinnati. "That's something we all experience throughout our lives.

"But major increases in forgetfulness are not something that we should expect as part of normal aging," adds Kelley, a member of the UC Neuroscience Institute's Memory Disorders Program team.

It's time to be concerned for yourself or a loved one, Kelley says, when lapses in memory reach the point where they start to impair normal function in day-to-day life, or when someone constantly repeats questions.

"Those are changes in excess of what we would expect in normal aging, and the kinds of things you should bring to your doctor's attention," he says.

If you think your memory slips have crossed the line into cause for concern, it's important to have your symptoms evaluated by a doctor. Because the symptoms could have many causes, the first step is to have a thorough diagnostic workup. After that, you likely would be referred to a specialist.

In the meantime, keep track of your memory slips over time, and don't be afraid to ask others to let you know if such lapses are becoming more frequent. To avoid lapses, make sure you get enough rest, handle one

task at a time and reduce mental clutter by using calendars and making lists.

It's important, Kelley notes, to stay intellectually active—and that isn't restricted to such challenging tasks as working puzzles or learning a new language.

"It can include such activities as gardening, reading or going to the symphony," he says. "Many varied forms of intellectual activity are useful in preserving our brain health."

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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