

Memory Changes & Family Support

What to notice and how respite can help



Memory changes can have many causes. What matters most is whether changes are becoming frequent, affecting everyday life or creating safety concerns. A medical evaluation is important when new or worsening changes appear.

Changes families may notice

- ☐ Repeating questions or stories
- ☐ Missing appointments or familiar plans
- ☐ Difficulty following familiar routines
- ☐ Trouble managing medications, bills or paperwork
- ☐ Getting lost or confused in familiar places
- ☐ Changes in judgment or decision-making
- ☐ Increased anxiety, frustration or withdrawal

Ways families can help

- Keep routines predictable and familiar
- Give one direction at a time
- Reduce unnecessary noise and distractions
- Allow extra time to respond
- Encourage independence when it is safe
- Use calm reassurance instead of arguing
- Share concerning changes with a healthcare professional

Respite care supports the family caregiver too

Caring for someone with memory changes can gradually become a full-time responsibility. Respite care allows a trusted caregiver to step in for a few hours, an evening, overnight or on a regular schedule so family members can work, attend appointments, rest or simply recharge.

Respite can include:

- Companionship and meaningful activities
- Meal preparation and hydration reminders
- Help with established daily routines
- Personal care assistance and supervision
- Overnight support when nighttime confusion is a concern

When to seek medical guidance

New or worsening confusion, changes in memory, behavior or daily functioning should be discussed with a healthcare professional. Sudden confusion can sometimes be caused by an urgent medical problem and should be evaluated promptly.

Support can begin before the family reaches exhaustion.

A few hours of companionship or respite may be enough to make daily life more manageable while needs are being evaluated.