MEMORY & THINKING CHANGES

Recognizing Memory Changes

Some changes come with normal aging. Others are worth discussing with a doctor.

Area	Changes to Discuss with a Doctor	Normal Aging
Familiar Tasks	Having a hard time cooking meals, paying bills, or driving to places you know well	Needing someone to help set up the TV remote or microwave
Judgement	Giving away money to strangers, falling for scams, or not keeping up with bathing	Making a bad choice once in a while
Communication	Losing track during a conversation, stopping mid-sentence, or calling things by the wrong name	Having a word “on the tip of your tongue” but finding it later
Memory	Asking the same question over and over, or forgetting something you just learned	Forgetting someone’s name but remembering it later
Misplacing Items	Putting things in odd places (like keys in the fridge) and not being able to find them	Losing your glasses but being able to retrace your steps
Mood & Behavior	Getting upset, scared, or suspicious much more easily than before	Feeling cranky when your routine changes
Planning	Trouble following a recipe, keeping track of bills, or working with numbers	Making a mistake in your checkbook once in a while
Social Withdrawal	Dropping out of hobbies, church, or social activities you used to enjoy	Not feeling like going out every now and then
Time/Place Orientation	Getting confused about what day, month, or season it is, or getting lost in a familiar place	Forgetting what day of the week it is for a moment
Visual Perception	Trouble with balance, reading, or judging how far away things are (not caused by eye problems)	Having blurry vision because of cataracts or needing new glasses

Understanding Memory Changes

As we get older, some changes in memory and thinking are normal. But some changes may be early signs of a medical condition that a doctor should know about.

Seeing a doctor early can help in many ways:

- **Rule out fixable causes:** Some memory problems are caused by medications, vitamin levels, thyroid problems, or depression. These can often be treated or reversed.
- **Plan ahead:** An early diagnosis gives you and your family time to make important decisions about care, finances, and daily life while you are still able to.
- **Get support:** Programs like support groups, caregiver classes, and respite care can make a real difference for families – and the sooner you connect, the more they can help.
- **Explore treatment options:** There are medications that may help slow memory loss, and healthy habits like exercise, staying social, and eating well can support brain health.

This chart is for general awareness only. It is not a diagnosis or a screening result.