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# Memory Changes or Something More? What Families Should Notice This Summer

BY LAURIE EDWARDS-TATE, M.S.

June is Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month, which makes this a good time for families to pay closer attention to the older adults they love.

Not every forgotten name, misplaced pair of glasses, or "Why did I walk into this room?" moment is cause for alarm. If that were the standard, most of us would be in trouble by lunchtime.

Some memory changes are a normal part of aging. But there is a difference between occasional forgetfulness and changes that begin to interfere with daily life, safety, judgment, or independence.

For families, the challenge is knowing what to look for.

Many adult children notice changes slowly. Maybe Mom repeats the same question several times during a visit. Maybe Dad forgets to pay a bill, misses an appointment, or seems unusually confused about the day or time. Maybe there is spoiled food in the refrigerator, unopened mail on the counter, or medications that do not seem to be taken correctly.

At first, these things can be easy to explain away.

"She's just tired."

"He's getting older."

"It was probably just a bad day."

And sometimes, that may be true. But when changes become more frequent, more noticeable, or more concerning, it may be time to take a closer look.

### Signs Families Should Not Ignore

Families do not need to diagnose a loved one. That is the role of a physician or qualified healthcare professional.

But families are often the first to notice when something has changed.

Some warning signs may include:

- Memory loss that disrupts daily routines
- Confusion with dates, time, or familiar places
- Difficulty managing medications, bills, appointments, or household tasks
- Poor judgment or unusual decision-making
- Withdrawal from conversations, hobbies, or social activities
- Changes in mood, personality, or behavior
- Trouble finding words or following a conversation
- Increased clutter, spoiled food, or signs that the home is not being maintained as usual
- Getting lost while driving or walking in familiar areas
- Repeated falls, accidents, or unexplained injuries

# *Memory Changes or Something More? What Families Should Notice This Summer*

One concerning moment may not mean a loved one has dementia or Alzheimer's disease. But a pattern of change should not be ignored.

Early attention matters because some causes of confusion or memory changes may be treatable. Medication side effects, infections, dehydration, poor sleep, depression, hearing loss, or other health conditions can sometimes look like cognitive decline. That is why families should raise concerns with a physician rather than simply assuming "this is just aging."

## **Why Home Support Matters**

When memory changes begin, many seniors are still able to live safely and comfortably at home — especially with the right support.

A trusted caregiver can help provide structure, reminders, companionship, and an extra set of eyes in the home. That support can make a meaningful difference for families who are trying to respect a loved one's independence while also making sure they are safe.

Caregivers can assist with daily routines, meal preparation, light housekeeping, transportation, personal care, and reminders. Just as importantly, they can help notice changes over time.

That does not replace family involvement or medical care. But it can help create a more stable environment and give families greater peace of mind.

At Your Home Familycare has supported families through many stages of aging, including the difficult moments when loved ones begin to notice memory changes. The goal is not to take away independence. The goal is to provide the right level of support so seniors can remain safe, respected, and cared for in the place they call home.

## **A Practical Step for Families**

This month, consider taking a quiet inventory during your next visit with an aging parent or loved one.

Look at the home. Look at the refrigerator. Look at the medications. Look at the mail. Pay attention to changes in conversation, appearance, mood, or daily function.

Most importantly, listen.

Many seniors work hard to hide changes because they fear losing independence. That fear is real. Families should approach these conversations with compassion, not accusation.

A helpful way to begin may be:

"I've noticed a few things lately, and I want to make sure you're okay. Can we talk about it?"

That conversation may not be easy. Few important conversations are.

But noticing early, asking questions, and getting support can help families make better decisions before a crisis occurs.

Aging should not mean being left alone to struggle quietly. With awareness, compassion, and the right help, families can better support the people they love — and help them remain safe and cared for at home.



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