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Some of these changes may be temporary. They may be the result of surgery, tumor removal, heightened stress, or treatments like chemotherapy. These are common changes and may improve over time.

In other people, these changes in memory or thinking are more persistent. They may begin to affect their ability to do activities of daily life such as work or self-care.

TYPES AND SYMPTOMS OF MEMORY OR THINKING CHANGES TO WATCH OUT FOR:

Chemo brain. Sometimes people receiving chemotherapy report changes in their ability to concentrate or remember things. Symptoms may include:

- Trouble concentrating (can't focus or feel spaced out)
- Difficulty with short-term memory (can't remember what happened yesterday)
- Memory lapses (can't remember names or dates)
- Taking longer to finish things (slowed thinking, disorganized)
- Trouble remembering common words (can't finish a sentence)

Chemo brain can be caused or worsened by many things, both mental and physical. In particular, your loved one's anxiety about chemo brain can make their ability to



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concentrate and remember things worse. It is important to note these changes and speak with your health care team. While there is no “cure” for chemo brain, there are steps to help manage it.

- **Acute/sudden mental changes.** If sudden changes occur, these can be signs of a more serious medical issue, including infection or problems reacting to medication. Symptoms may include:
 - Alertness/consciousness that comes and goes
 - Not knowing what is going on around them
 - Agitation or confusion
 - Loud, aggressive behavior
 - Hallucinations (seeing things that aren't really there)

These changes might be a sign of a condition called delirium. If you notice these changes, contact your health care team right away, or go to the emergency room.

- **Gradual-onset changes/dementia.** These are changes in memory or thinking due to the cancer/treatment, not Alzheimer's. They can occur slowly and can be long-lasting. They may not even appear until after treatment. Symptoms include:
 - Problems with memory
 - Poor judgment/making unsafe decisions
 - Changes in personality
 - Disorientation

WHAT CAN BE DONE:

- Talk with your health care team to better understand what may be causing the changes in your loved one's memory or thinking. They can help you explore what medical and psychosocial steps might be helpful. This could be a change in medication or seeking additional support.
- Encourage your loved one to keep some form of planner (electronic, notebook) to help them stay focused. They can use it to store needed information, information on medicines, questions, and key dates.
- Encourage your loved one to set up and follow a regular schedule/routine as much as possible.

General Cancer Information, Survivorship & Support

Cancer Support Community • 888-793-9355 • www.CancerSupportCommunity.org

American Cancer Society • 800-227-2345 • www.cancer.org

CancerCare • 800-813-4673 • www.cancercare.org

Cancer.net • 888-651-3038 • www.cancer.net

Caregiver Action Network • 855-227-3640 • www.caregiveraction.org

Healthcare.gov • www.healthcare.gov

Livestrong Foundation • 866-673-7205 • www.livestrong.org

National Cancer Institute • 800-422-6237 • www.cancer.gov

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine • 888-644-6226 • www.nccam.nih.gov

Patient Advocate Foundation • 800-532-5274 • www.patientadvocate.org

Cancer Support Community Resources

Cancer Support Community's (CSC) resources and programs are available free of charge. Call 888-793-9355 or visit www.CancerSupportCommunity.org for more info.

Cancer Support Helpline® — Have questions, concerns or looking for resources? Call CSC's toll-free Cancer Support Helpline (888-793-9355), available in 200 languages Mon–Fri, 9 am–9 pm ET.

Open to Options® — Preparing for your next appointment? Our trained specialists can help you create a list of questions to share with your doctor. Make an appointment by calling 888-793-9355 or by contacting your local CSC or Gilda's Club.

Frankly Speaking About Cancer® — Trusted information for cancer patients and their loved ones is available through publications, online, and in-person programs. www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FranklySpeakingAboutCancer.

Services at Local CSCs and Gilda's Clubs — With the help of 170 locations, CSC and Gilda's Club affiliates provide services free of charge to people touched by cancer. Attend support groups, educational sessions, wellness programs, and more at a location near you. www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FindLocation.

MyLifeLine — CSC's private, online community allows patients and caregivers to easily connect with friends and family to receive social, emotional, and practical support throughout the cancer journey and beyond. Connect with other caregivers by joining the Caregiver Support online discussion board. Sign up at www.MyLifeLine.org.

Grassroots Network — Make sure your voice is heard by federal and state policy makers on issues affecting cancer patients and survivors by joining our Network at www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/become-advocate.

Cancer Experience Registry® — Help others by sharing your cancer patient or cancer caregiver experience via survey at www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org.

The Cancer Support Community provides this information as a service. This publication is not intended to take the place of medical care or the advice of your doctor. We strongly suggest consulting your doctor or other health care professionals to answer questions and learn more.

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