



HELPING YOU **HELP YOURSELF**

Memory and Thinking

What is a memory and thinking evaluation?

A memory and thinking evaluation allows your doctor to check your ability to remember, retain, and process information. An evaluation can show:

- If you have issues with memory or thinking. It is normal for adults to have slight memory problems as they get older. But some people have memory or thinking problems that are more serious.
- The types of problems you have, and how serious they are.
- What conditions might be causing your memory or thinking challenges.

Some evaluations can be completed in one visit. Other evaluations may require multiple visits to determine if problems improve or worsen over time.

What does an evaluation involve?

- **Meeting with your doctor or nurse.** Your doctor or nurse will talk with you and your family about your symptoms, behavior, and daily activities and any changes that have occurred. You will also be asked about your medical issues, medicines, and drug and alcohol use.
- **Tests for your memory and thinking.** The doctor or nurse will ask some questions to check your memory and thinking. For example, he or she might tell you three words and ask you to repeat them after a few minutes have passed. You might also see other practitioners for more detailed testing.

- **A physical exam.**
- **Blood tests.** These tests check for other conditions that could be causing your symptoms.
- **CT or MRI scan.** These imaging tests create pictures of your brain. Not everyone needs a brain scan. Your doctor will determine if a brain scan is appropriate based on your symptoms and physical exam.

Why is it important to have an evaluation?

Some memory and thinking problems can be treated. An evaluation will allow your doctor to prescribe a treatment that may improve or eliminate your symptoms.

A memory and thinking evaluation is the first step toward identifying and treating cognitive issues.

On the other hand, some memory or thinking problems are untreatable. Knowing this is helpful, as it allows you to plan for your present and long-term needs. For example, if your memory or thinking challenges might affect your ability to perform certain daily tasks or activities, you can get help for those tasks or activities. And, if you know that your condition is not likely to improve, you and your family can make thoughtful plans for the future.



CHATSWORTH
AT PGA NATIONAL
An Erickson Living Continuing Care Community

347 Hiatt Drive
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418
Phone: 561-227-3200
ChatsworthPGA.com

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