

Memory or concentration

Some people have changes in memory, concentration and the ability to think clearly. Your doctor may call these problems cancer-related cognitive changes, or chemo brain. You may notice these kinds of changes during and after cancer treatment.

Although it is sometimes called chemo brain, these changes can also affect people who have not had chemotherapy. We do not know what causes these effects. Or how many people are affected by them. The changes may be caused by different factors, including:

- cancer treatment
- the cancer itself
- side effects of treatment such as infection or anaemia
- emotions such as anxiety and depression.

Common symptoms include:

- difficulty concentrating
- trouble remembering things
- difficulty doing more than one thing at a time (multi-tasking)
- extreme tiredness
- a feeling of mental 'fogginess'.

If you have any of these symptoms, tell your doctor. They can check for side effects of treatment (such as anaemia) that could be making things worse.

The effects of chemo brain are usually temporary. But for some people, symptoms can continue for years after treatment.

The symptoms can be frustrating and can affect your everyday life. They may delay some people from going back to work, school or to social events.

Tips for coping with memory or concentration changes

- Make shopping lists or 'to-do' lists, so that you feel sure you won't forget anything.
- Mental exercises such as crosswords, word games and puzzles may help to improve your memory and concentration.
- Keep a calendar, diary, or use your mobile phone to help you remember important dates and appointments. Or carry a note book.
- Stress can affect your memory. Relaxation can reduce stress and may help to improve your memory and concentration.
- Being physically active can help you feel more alert and reduce tiredness (fatigue).
- Have a manageable daily routine and try to keep to it.
- Tell your family and friends so they can support you.
- Try to eat a healthy diet, take regular breaks and get plenty of rest.

Local resources:

Resource	Contact details

National resources:

Resource	Contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> www.bacp.co.uk Tel 0145 588 3300 www.mind.org.uk Tel 0300 123 3393

Further information**More information and support**

www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/side-effects-and-symptoms/other-side-effects/chemo-brain.html

Our booklets and leaflets are available to order free on **be.macmillan.org.uk**

- **Side effects of cancer treatment**
- **Side effects from chemotherapy**
- **Side effects from radiotherapy**
- **Your fatigue diary**

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, or visit **macmillan.org.uk**

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

We produce information in a range of formats and languages. To order these visit **macmillan.org.uk/otherformats** or call our support line.