

Memory or concentration

During cancer treatment, you may notice changes in your memory, concentration or ability to think clearly. These are called [cancer-related cognitive changes](#) (CRCCs) or chemo brain. But changes in memory and concentration can affect people with cancer who have not had chemotherapy.

Any problems with concentration or memory are usually temporary and mild. But they can be frustrating and interfere with your normal activities. They may delay you from going back to work, school or social events. For some people, symptoms can continue for years after treatment.

Common symptoms include:

- extreme tiredness (fatigue)
- feeling like you cannot think clearly
- finding it hard to remember things
- being unusually disorganised
- finding it difficult to do more than one thing at a time
- getting distracted more easily
- feeling low in mood.

If you have these symptoms, you should talk to your doctor about them. It can be helpful to keep a record of your symptoms to show the doctor. Your doctor may:

- check for symptoms or side effects (such as anaemia) that could be contributing to your symptoms
- check if any of your medicines could be making symptoms worse
- refer you for specialist help, such as a counsellor or a support group.

Tips for coping with memory or concentration changes

- Keep a record of your symptoms. This can help you to plan your day, so that you save more difficult tasks for when you feel at your best. It can also help you notice if things improve over time.
- Write important things down to help you remember them later. Make lists or notes. Or use a diary or app on your mobile phone.
- Memory exercises may help train your brain and improve your memory and concentration. You can help keep your mind active by learning something new or starting a new hobby.
- Stress can affect your memory. Relaxation can reduce [stress](#), and may help to improve your memory and concentration. Do activities that help you relax, such as listening to music, walking or yoga. You could do some [relaxation exercises](#) or try using relaxation CDs or apps.
- Being [physically active](#) can help you feel more alert and reduce tiredness ([fatigue](#)).
- Have a daily routine, and try to keep to it.
- Keep things simple and avoid distractions. Try to do one thing at a time. For example, if you need to concentrate, turn off the TV and radio.
- Tell your family and friends so they can support you.
- Try to eat a [healthy diet](#), take regular breaks and get plenty of rest.

Macmillan Cancer Support resources

We have more information on our [website](#), including audiobooks. Or you can order our free booklets and leaflets on be.macmillan.org.uk such as:

- [Side effects of cancer treatment](#)
- [Coping with fatigue \(tiredness\)](#)
- [Side effects from chemotherapy – easy read](#)
- [Side effects from radiotherapy – easy read](#)

We produce information in a [range of formats](#) and [languages](#). To order these, visit our website or call our support line.

Further Macmillan support

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 where you can [chat to us online](#).

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.

Or if you want to share your experiences or ask questions, you can find find others who understand on our [Online Community](#).

Other useful contact details

- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) – visit www.bacp.co.uk or call 0145 588 3300
- Mind – visit www.mind.org.uk or call 0300 123 3393.

Notes and questions
