

Memory and Concentration Tips

Memory problems are quite common after cancer treatment. For many people, the brain does recover gradually, although some people continue to have cognitive changes that disrupt their thinking and memory. If you have noticed these difficulties, the following tips may help you to make the most of your brain power.

- **Memory Notebook and Calendar**

- **Many people find it helpful to keep one small notebook with them at all times, so everything goes in the same place.** This includes not only appointments and to-do lists, but also comments or suggestions from health care providers and others. You can have sections for different topics if that helps you find things later. Check out an office supply store for the best notebook option for you to try.
- **Use your smart phone, online calendar, or family calendar to help keep track of appointments and to do lists.** Put everything you want to remember to do in this same list or calendar. Now you'll always know where to look when you want to remember what you want to do or where you need to be.

- **Form Memory Habits**

- **Do the same thing at the same time in the same place, like putting your car keys in the same place.** Keep a basket by the door where you can put all the things you want to remember. If you regularly forget to do something, put a post-it reminder by something you always do. For example, if you forget to take medication at night, but you always brush your teeth, keep your medication by your toothbrush.

- **Managing Mood**

- **Sometimes reactions (frustrated, angry, sad, worried) to memory problems can actually make it harder for you to remember something.** Try saying to yourself: "it's just brain overload, let me slow down and take some deep breaths." Or you might try taking a break for 10 minutes to help you focus afterward, it really does help. If you have trouble with depression and/or anxiety, talk to your healthcare provider for referrals to counseling or for medication.

- **Physical Activity**

- **Regular physical activity can improve memory as well as energy.** New studies make it clear that people who exercise regularly have better brain function.

- **Sleep**

- **Lack of restful sleep contributes to fatigue, which can contribute to memory and concentration problems.** Be sure to get a good night's sleep. Talk to your doctor if sleep is a regular problem.

- **Focus Your Attention**

- **Get rid of distractions and focus on one task at a time.** No brain really does two things at once, but if your brain is switching slower between tasks, turn off the music or TV, reduce outside noise, put up a 'do not disturb' sign, and make sure you are only trying to do one thing at a time.