

Memory and Concentration

Just the Facts

Changes in memory and concentration are common throughout the early phases of transplant and after transplant. These changes are almost always medically related. In most cases they will be temporary and will decrease as you continue to get better.

Memory and concentration problems may be situational and vary day by day due to stress/pain/medications and fatigue. Since you may have good and bad days, you may want to use routine strategies to assist you when you are having a bad day.

Your Goals:

- ✓ Learn how to cope with temporary changes in memory and concentration.
- ✓ Get professional help when needed.

Urgent Signs and Symptoms:

Call the Clinic or the After Hours Clinic NOW if:

- ☐ Disoriented.
- ☐ Confused.

Important Signs and Symptoms:

Report symptoms to doctor or nurse during clinic hours today.

- ☐ Forgetting things more quickly and more often than usual.
- ☐ Harder to read more than a paragraph or a page at a time.
- ☐ Hard to keep your mind from wandering.

What You Can Do At Home:

Learn how to cope with temporary changes in memory and concentration.

- ➡ Write down important information. Keep these notes on a notepad that is small enough to keep with you at all times.
- ➡ Ask people to repeat things.
- ➡ Keep a list of questions for your doctor. Write the answers down.
- ➡ Tape record important conversations or conferences.
- ➡ Get important information in writing. Ask people to write it down for you.
- ➡ Place notes around the house to remind you of things.
- ➡ Keep an appointment calendar.
- ➡ Use a device to remind you to take your medications such as a watch that can be programmed to go off at times when medications need to be taken.
- ➡ Keep things in a designated place, for example: always keep your keys in the same place.
- ➡ Be understanding with yourself and know that these temporary changes are to be expected.

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How Can I Keep My Mind Active?

Below is a list of resources you might want to utilize to enhance your cognitive abilities. Although age takes its toll on most everyone in this area, there are things you can do to regain some of your mental plasticity and prevent any further decline in your cognitive faculties!

- ➡ **Puzzle Books:** Cross- word puzzles are known to improve mental skills.
- ➡ **Sudoku:** Similar to a cross word puzzle, but with numbers instead.
- ➡ **Card Games:** Start with a shuffled deck of cards and a stopwatch. Sort the cards into separate piles, one for each suite (diamonds, clubs, spades, hearts). Do this three times daily. A typical young adult can do this in 35 seconds. Keep practicing this task until you can do it in that amount of time!

Get a [Creative Whack Pack](#), a card pack that has ideas for stimulating creative thinking and alternate problem-solving methods.

Play and learn other card games such as Bridge, Rummy, Pinochle, Canasta, Cribbage, Black Jack, or Solitaire.

- ➡ **Games:** Play stimulating games such as Chess, Checkers, Scrabble and any other games you enjoy. If your kids have a Nintendo Playstation, you can get Brain Age, a game developed by neuroscience researchers to improve mental abilities and hand/eye coordination. .
- ➡ **Hobbies:** Learn a new skill such as knitting or crocheting, or a new sport. Try writing and brushing your teeth with the opposite hand than you usually do.
- ➡ **Conversation:** Enjoy a cup of coffee with a friend and discuss world events.
- ➡ **Languages:** Learn a new language. Rosetta Stone has CD's that you can purchase in various languages.
- ➡ **Read Books:** Join a book club, or attend a book reading. A couple of suggestions include:

The Better Brain Book by David Perlmutter and Carol Colman

Whole Brain Thinking by Jacquelyn Wonder and Priscilla Donovan

Carved in Sand by Cathryn Jakobson Ramin (the story of her struggle with early onset memory loss)

➡ **Websites:** A couple of suggestions include:

www.positscience.com is a website where you can try out a couple of the exercises from their Brain Fitness Program. This program has been used to help veterans with traumatic brain injuries recover some of their capabilities.

www.e-mindfitness.com is a website where you can purchase a new version of MindFit, designed specifically for patients with a history of exposure to chemotherapy. Make sure you get the “-“ in the e-mail address, as there is an imposter site that is very similar.

Get professional help when needed.

➡ If problems persist or effect day-to-day living to a large degree, discuss the symptoms with your nurse or doctor.