

Chemo-Brain and Memory Problems

Many people with cancer and in cancer treatment have trouble thinking, remembering, and concentrating. Try these tips to help you manage mental cloudiness or “chemo-brain.”

TRY THIS

Follow a routine. Stay organized with a planner or calendar.

Leave notes for yourself. Post reminder notes where you’ll see them, or set alerts on your phone.

CHECK THIS OUT

Visit the Springboard page on Chemo-Brain and Memory Problems. <https://smokefree.gov/springboard/symptoms/chemo-brain>

Learn about chemo-brain (<http://goo.gl/frtU>) and memory changes (<http://go.usa.gov/xxADk>).

Get tips to manage memory or concentration problems. <http://go.usa.gov/xxADk>

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/>

Appetite Changes

Appetite changes and difficulty eating are common issues that result from cancer treatments. Try these tips to keep you nourished during your cancer journey.

TRY THIS

Snack often. Eat small snacks throughout the day instead of three large meals.

Eat bland foods. Avoid foods with strong smells and flavors.

Try liquid meals. Have smoothies, shakes, or other types of liquid meals.

CHECK THIS OUT

Visit the Springboard page on Appetite Changes.

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/symptoms/appetite-changes>

Learn ways to deal with appetite loss (<http://go.usa.gov/xxAbe>) and appetite changes (<http://goo.gl/TF8nbq>).

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/>

Fatigue

Fatigue is a very common side effect of cancer treatment that can disrupt your ability to do everyday things. Here’s what you can do to help deal with fatigue.

TRY THIS

Ask for help. Reach out to friends and family to help you with chores and errands.

Set priorities. Identify the most important tasks each day, and then focus your energy on those tasks.

Keep a schedule. Wake up, go to bed, and rest at the same times each day.

Be active. Get an energy boost with exercise, even if it’s only for a few minutes.

CHECK THIS OUT

Visit the Springboard page on Fatigue.

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/symptoms/fatigue>

Listen to this audio recording for ways to deal with fatigue caused by cancer treatment. <http://go.usa.gov/xxAeQ>

Find out what caregivers can do to help you. <http://goo.gl/27UKHH>

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/>

Hair Loss

Cancer patients tend to lose hair when they receive certain chemotherapy drugs or radiation therapy. You can prepare for and cope with hair loss by following these tips.

TRY THIS

Protect your skin. Use sunscreen or wear a head cover to avoid sun exposure.

Try gentle products. Use shampoos, hairbrushes, and pillowcases that are easy on your scalp and hair.

Keep your hair short. Have your hair cut short to make it look thicker.

CHECK THIS OUT

Visit the Springboard page on Hair Loss.

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/symptoms/hairloss>

Learn more from the Look Good Feel Better program.

<http://goo.gl/oFzgTT>

Get additional resources about hair loss (alopecia) and hair loss from chemo. <http://go.usa.gov/xxAth>

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/>

Infections

Infections begin when germs enter the body and cause harm. Cancer and certain treatments can increase your risk of getting an infection, but you can protect yourself.

TRY THIS

Wash your hands. Keep your hands clean, especially before eating.

Take care of cuts, scrapes, and surgery wounds. Clean broken skin and protect it with a bandage.

Avoid germs. Stay away from people who are sick or have a cold. Avoid crowds. Make sure your food is clean and thoroughly cooked.

CHECK THIS OUT

Visit the Springboard page on Infections.

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/symptoms/infections>

Learn the signs of infection (<http://goo.gl/bw6E7q>) and how to prevent infections in people with cancer (<http://goo.gl/EUOoEX>).

Learn three simple steps to help avoid infection. <http://goo.gl/x0vdHZ>

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/>

Mouth, Gum, Throat Problems

During cancer treatment, some patients may get painful sores in their mouth and throat. Other problems can also affect the mouth and throat that cause unwanted symptoms.

TRY THIS

Eat soft foods. Choose foods that are soft, wet, and easy to swallow.

Try liquid meals. Have smoothies, shakes, or other types of liquid meals.

CHECK THIS OUT

Visit the Springboard page on Mouth, Gum, and Throat Problems.

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/symptoms/mouth-gum-throat-problems>

Learn the signs of mouth and throat problems. <http://goo.gl/KJHhu>

Listen to this audio recording on managing mouth and throat pain during radiation therapy. <http://go.usa.gov/xxJsB>

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/>

Nausea and Vomiting

Cancer treatment causes nausea and vomiting. Controlling these symptoms will help you to feel better and prevent more serious problems such as malnutrition and dehydration.

TRY THIS

Stay hydrated. Drink fluids and eat foods with lots of water, like fruits or soup.

Fast before and after treatment. Don't eat for one hour before and after treatment.

Avoid foods that irritate your mouth. Stay away from foods that are crunchy, salty, spicy, or sugary. Also avoid alcohol and tobacco.

CHECK THIS OUT

Visit the Springboard page on Nausea and Vomiting.

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/symptoms/nausea>

Listen to this audio recording for tips to manage nausea and vomiting.

<http://go.usa.gov/xxJsQ>

Learn about anti-nausea/vomiting (antiemetic) medicines.

<http://goo.gl/6R08hl>

Get tips your caregivers can use to help you stay hydrated.

<http://goo.gl/vrCKbr>

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/>

Sexual Problems for Men

Many cancer treatments and some types of cancer can cause sexual side effects. You can get help if you are having sexual problems after cancer treatment.

TRY THIS

Talk with your health care team. Ask about sexual problems you may have during and after treatment.

Talk to your partner. Communication is an important part of sexual relationships.

CHECK THIS OUT

Visit the Springboard page on Sexual Problems for Men

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/symptoms/sexual-problems-for-men> and Sexual Problems for Women.

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/symptoms/sexual-problems-for-women>

Get information on sexuality (<http://go.usa.gov/xxJse>) and reproductive issues for men and women with cancer

(<http://go.usa.gov/xxJHx>).

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/>

Sexual Problems for Women

Many cancer treatments and some types of cancer can cause sexual side effects. You can get help if you are having sexual problems after cancer treatment.

TRY THIS

Talk with your health care team. Ask about sexual problems you may have during and after treatment.

Talk to your partner. Communication is an important part of sexual relationships.

CHECK THIS OUT

Visit the Springboard page on Sexual Problems for Men <https://smokefree.gov/springboard/symptoms/sexual-problems-for-men> and Sexual Problems for Women.

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/symptoms/sexual-problems-for-women>

Get information on sexuality (<http://go.usa.gov/xxJse>) and reproductive issues for men and women with cancer (<http://go.usa.gov/xxJHx>).

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/>

Tingling, Burning, and Numbness (Neuropathy)

Some cancer treatments and tumors can damage peripheral nerves, which are nerves that are away from the brain and spinal cord. Damage to these nerves is known as neuropathy.

TRY THIS

Protect your hands and feet. Wear gloves when you clean, work outdoors, or do repairs.

Stay warm. Keep your hands and feet warm and covered in cold weather.

Be careful at night. Avoid injuries by using a night light or flashlight.

CHECK THIS OUT

Visit the Springboard page on Neuropathy. <https://smokefree.gov/springboard/symptoms/tingling-burning-numbness>

Learn if your symptoms might be signs of neuropathy.

<http://goo.gl/Gkd7vE>

Find out if the chemo drugs you're taking are linked to neuropathy.

<http://goo.gl/695s8Y>

See simple everyday things you can do to manage your symptoms.

<http://goo.gl/VrwR37>

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/>

Healthy Eating

Eating well can help you feel and live better during and after treatment. Here are some tips to help you.

TRY THIS

Work with a specialist. Ask a dietitian to help you create a nutritious, balanced eating plan.

Shop smart. Stock your kitchen with healthy foods.

Practice mindful eating. Don't get too hungry before you eat. Stop eating when you're full.

CHECK THIS OUT

Visit the Springboard page Healthy Eating.

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/wellness/healthy-eating>

Sign up for HealthyYouTXT. <http://go.usa.gov/xaKpV>

Watch these videos on healthy eating, acting, and living.

<https://goo.gl/0lmSHq>

Learn more about nutrition after treatment ends. <http://goo.gl/LBjsmv>

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/>

Health Care Team

Cancer treatment typically requires a team of health care professionals, including doctors, nurses, and other staff who help take care of you before, during, and after treatment.

TRY THIS

Establish good communication. Take notes and bring someone with you to appointments.

Build a relationship. Let your health care team know what you expect from them.

Be prepared. Write down questions ahead of appointments.

Consider a second opinion. Ask your doctor for a referral and to share your medical records.

CHECK THIS OUT

Visit the Springboard page Health Care Team.

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/get-support/health-care-team>

Get additional resources to help you. <http://goo.gl/gkj0K3>

Read this fact sheet on communication in cancer care.

<http://go.usa.gov/xaKvD>

<https://smokefree.gov/springboard/>