



## Cognitive Function & Cancer Survivorship

**Goal:** That a patient's reported experience of cognitive dysfunction associated with cancer treatment will be supported/validated and the patient will be screened for any underlying disorders.

### Screening Questions:

1. Do you have difficulties with multi-tasking or attention?
2. Do you have difficulties remembering things?
3. Does your thinking seem slow?

### What we know about cancer-associated cognitive dysfunction (also called "chemo brain" by some):

Diagnostic imaging is only recommended when your provider has concerns that you are at high risk for a neurologic deficit.

Cognitive dysfunction is often reported in association with cancer diagnosis and treatment, especially in patients who were treated with central nervous system radiation and/or intra-thecal chemotherapy.

Cancer-associated cognitive dysfunction is NOT a progressive neurologic disorder. In fact, it improves over time.

### Tips:

Some find it helpful to use enhanced organization strategies such as memory aids like notebooks and planners, maps, keeping items in the same place (such as your keys and cell phone), and using reminder notes.

Avoid multi-tasking and minimize distraction, especially at work. Give yourself permission to focus on one thing at a time.

Learn what your cognitive strengths are and work on those (for example, what is your best time of day to accomplish a task?).

Set a routine or schedule that you follow consistently every day.

Get enough rest.

Limit alcohol and other substances that can alter cognition.

Be aware of the potential cognitive side effects and cautions with medications you are taking.

Try relaxation training to help focus your attention. For example, yoga meditation and/or simple yoga poses are mentally and physically calming and focus concentration.

Routine exercise that increases respirations and heart rate helps elevate mood and alertness (for example, walking, lifting 1-3 lb. hand weights, or going up a staircase).

Some find occupational therapy helpful.

Discuss your frustrations about slower moments with supportive friends and family.

Write in a journal to see what influences your memory problems.

Take a break with distraction by watching television or a funny movie.

Most importantly, do not criticize yourself for not being able to remember.

Acceptance without judgment is helpful in coping.



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## Resources for Cognition, Fatigue and Sleep Disorders



### Brain Games

[www.lumosity.com](http://www.lumosity.com)



### Brain Teasers online

Joseph and Lena are found dead on the floor with some water around. The windows are open and a strong wind draft is blowing the curtains around. How did they die?

[www.buzzle.com](http://www.buzzle.com)



**Fit Brains Blog:** All Things About Your Brain -- Health & Lifestyle, Tips & Tricks, Fun & Games, Contests, Fit Brains News & Offers, More!

[www.fitbrains.com/blog/](http://www.fitbrains.com/blog/)  
Brain teasers on Fridays!



### Progressive Muscle Relaxation

GREAT for going to sleep  
Just search "Progressive Muscle Relaxation" on [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com) or in the App Store

## Sleep Diary for Improving Sleep

<http://sleepfoundation.org/>

The form is titled 'NATIONAL SLEEP FOUNDATION Sleep Diary' and is divided into two main sections: 'Complete in Morning' and 'Complete at the End of Day'. The 'Morning' section includes fields for start and end times, caffeine/alcohol intake, and a checklist for sleep quality. The 'End of Day' section includes fields for caffeine/alcohol intake, exercise, and a checklist for sleep quality. The form is designed to be filled out daily for a week.

Or create your own Sleep Diary with spaces for:

- ❖ The time you went to bed and woke up
- ❖ How long and well you slept
- ❖ When you were awake during the night
- ❖ How much caffeine or alcohol you consumed and when
- ❖ What and when you ate and drank
- ❖ What emotion or stress you had
- ❖ What drugs or medications you took



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