

# CHEMOBRAIN: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

If you are having memory problems and trouble focusing on tasks, finding words or managing daily activities, you are not alone. These are examples of symptoms of “chemobrain,” a possible side effect of chemotherapy that can affect cognitive or thinking abilities. It’s important to talk to your health care team if you’re having any of the symptoms of chemobrain during or after treatment.



## SYMPTOMS OF CHEMOBRAIN

- Forgetfulness or memory lapses
- Difficulties concentrating or focusing on tasks
- Trouble recalling or remembering common words or names
- Struggling to do more than one task at a time

Coping with symptoms of chemobrain involves finding ways to help you remember things better and doing activities that keep your memory sharp. For tips to cope with chemobrain, read CancerCare’s fact sheets titled “Coping with Chemobrain: Keeping Your Memory Sharp” and “Improving Your Concentration: Three Key Steps.”

## START A HEALTH CARE JOURNAL

If you experience chemobrain or any treatment side effects, starting a health care journal can be helpful. Having a journal or notebook will allow you to keep all of your health information in one place. If you are experiencing chemobrain, it may be helpful write down the following in your journal or notebook:

- The time and place first experienced any chemobrain

- What you were doing and any symptoms you experienced
- The frequency of chemobrain symptoms
- Any activity that you think helped you cope with chemobrain
- Any medications you may be taking
- Any questions you may have for your health care team

Have this journal along any time to you talk your health care team.

## TALK TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

If you have problems with memory and attention, or other difficulties related to chemobrain, speaking with your doctor is an important first step in getting the care you need. Write down your questions and concerns about any side effects and treatment in your health care journal before your next medical appointment. In addition to bringing questions, if possible, bring someone with you to any appointment. Another set of ears can help reduce confusion. Here are questions that may want to ask your health care team:

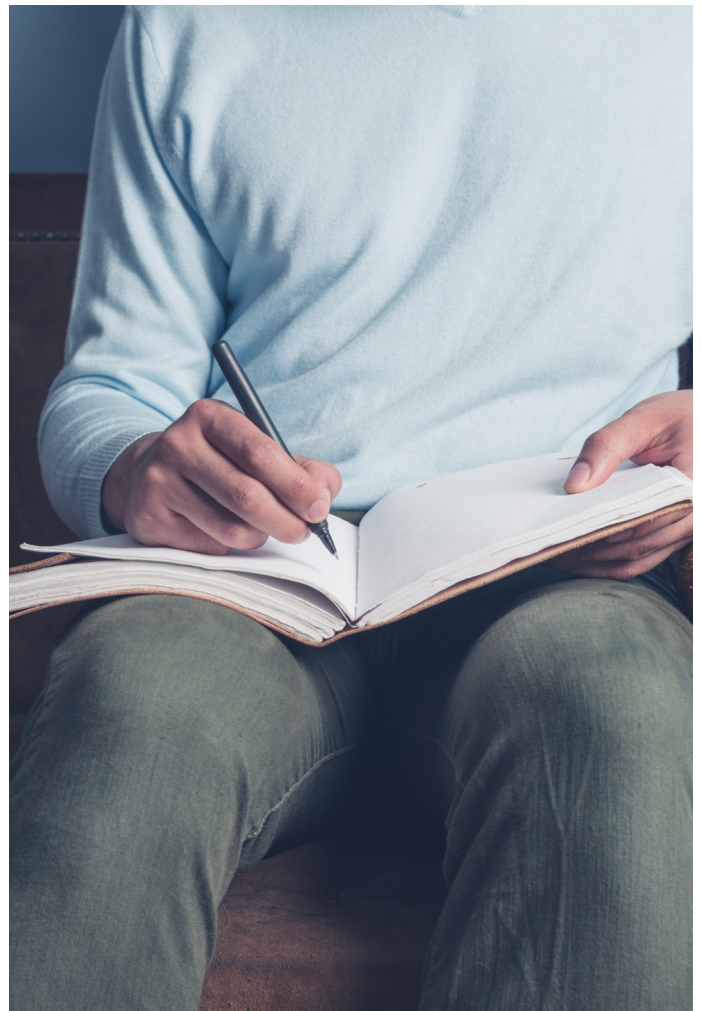
- What is causing my chemobrain?
- How long do chemobrain symptoms usually last?

- Can you evaluate me to see if my chemobrain symptoms are related to anything that could be more easily treated, such as low blood count or other medications I am taking?
- Should I see a neuropsychologist (an expert trained in how the nervous system, especially the brain, controls mental functions such as language, memory, and perception) ? If so, can you refer me to a neuropsychologist to be evaluated?
- What do you recommend I do to improve my memory?

In addition to your health care team, you may want to let friends and family know. You may be relieved talking to someone you trust and they can help you better cope with chemobrain.

### AN ONCOLOGY SOCIAL WORKER CAN HELP

Professional oncology social workers at CancerCare understand the complex issues that arise with a cancer diagnosis. Social workers can help you manage any emotional or practical concerns that may be causing chemobrain and help you develop ways to cope. CancerCare's professional oncology social workers help anyone affected by cancer, free of charge. To speak with a professional oncology social worker, call 800-813-HOPE (4673).



### CancerCare® Can Help

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