

We have compiled cancer information from some of our most trusted sources. This article on Chemo Brain is from **ChemoCare** and addresses the concerns patients may feel during or after chemotherapy.

Chemo Brain

The phrase "chemo brain" has come to be used by cancer survivors to describe changes in memory, attention, concentration, and abilities to perform various mental tasks that are associated with receiving chemotherapy treatments for cancer.

In medical jargon the effects of chemo brain are referred to as *cognitive deficits* or *declining neuropsychological functioning*. In recent years more focus has been placed on this phenomena as a side effect of chemotherapy.

Other Factors Contributing to the "Chemo Brain" Effect:

- Aging
- Depression
- Menopause
- Low blood counts
- Medications
- Emotional upheaval of cancer.

An example of the increasing interest in "chemo brain" in the research community is the published results of a study in the January 15, 2002 issue of The Journal of Clinical Oncology. The study looked at the neuropsychologic impact of standard-dose chemotherapy in long-term survivors of breast cancer and lymphoma. The findings of this study showed that chemotherapy could be associated with cognitive deficits or "chemo brain," in some patients. These "chemo brain" deficits were found to be subtle, and that survival benefit of chemotherapy far outweighs the potential risks to memory or concentration for most patients.

Now that "chemo brain" is being recognized and focused on, some of the directions of study are attempting to determine which chemotherapies are more prone to contributing to chemo brain. Researchers are also looking at developing ways of preventing chemo brain from happening or strategies to help survivors who continue to experience thinking problems.

What Can You Do If You Are Experiencing "Chemo Brain"?

- Avoid distraction
- Ask people to repeat information
- Practice tasks
- Write down information
- Use a daily organizer
- Keep a journal
- Post reminders
- Get organized
- Exercise your memory
- Manage stress
- Get plenty of sleep
- Increase physical activity
- Use mnemonic devices (a formula or rhyme, used as an aid in remembering)
- Do crossword puzzles
- Ask for help

Note: If you experience symptoms of "chemo brain," we strongly encourage you to talk with your health care professional about your specific medical condition and treatments. The information contained in this website is meant to be helpful and educational, but is not a substitute for medical advice.

Source: <http://www.chemocare.com/chemotherapy/side-effects/chemobrain-how-to-identify.aspx>