

MEMORY AND CONCENTRATION

■ Important information for you

Do you feel you are forgetting everything? That you can't remember where your keys are? Relax, it's normal. Problems of memory and concentration are frequent during cancer.

Fatigue is the main cause of this state of affairs. It affects both body and mind, revealing itself in memory lapses and difficulty paying attention or thinking. For example, it can be an effort to read a newspaper or recall the several things you have to do. Patients often describe it as a 'mental fog'.

The second cause of this state is the effect of the anti-cancer treatment on the brain. It has been demonstrated that during chemotherapy the brain has to mobilize more energy and use more resources than usual. You will recover your faculties to the full in the months following the end of therapy.

It is important to note that these side effects may prevent you from pursuing your professional activities and require you to postpone resuming work for some weeks or months.

Learning to manage the symptoms

Your difficulty in concentrating may contribute to an emotional exhaustion. Recognising the problem is the first step to tackling it and working out appropriate strategies.



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Medical imaging has shown that the brain of a patient undergoing chemotherapy has to activate more grey cells to do a simple calculation.

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Regular physical activity is the only proven effective means of lessening the sense of fatigue.

Some advice

- ▶ Make a list of what you have to remember: shopping, phone calls, medical appointments etc.
- ▶ Plan your tasks for the next day.
- ▶ Alternate periods of activity and rest.
- ▶ Save your concentration for things of importance.
- ▶ Avoid multi-tasking. Concentrate on one activity at a time.
- ▶ Share your concerns with those around you. Their help in some of your tasks will save your energy.
- ▶ Keep some amusements and distractions in hand to refresh you.
- ▶ Ask to talk with a psychologist or a psychiatrist if you feel you can't cope with daily life.



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The documents you have to hand – *Mieux vivre les traitements contre le cancer – informations et conseils pratiques* [Practical information and advice for a better experience of cancer treatment] – are presented in a short form with essential pointers to assist you when you are tired and have difficulty concentrating.



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