

Brain Fog in Post COVID-19 Recovery



During COVID-19 recovery, many patients say that they experience “brain fog”. This is a term that people use to describe issues that they have with their usual cognition or ‘thinking’ such as problems with concentration, memory, mental speed, planning, and problem-solving. Some people describe this as being unable to focus or to feel sharp in their thinking.

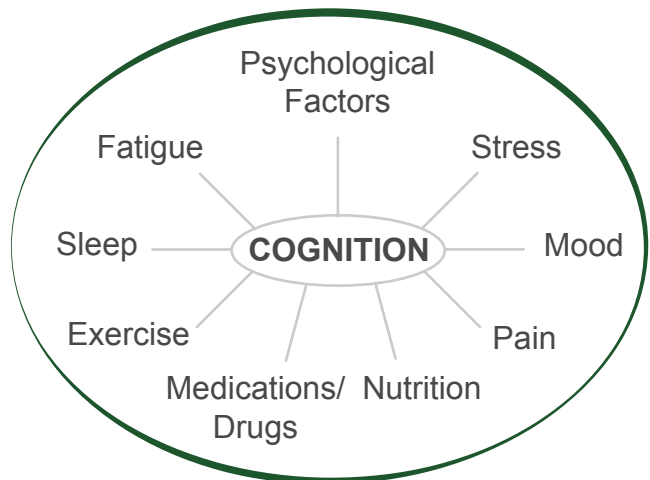
These symptoms can be worse or last longer if you also have other challenges such as a learning disability, sleep problems, pain, or mental health issues.

Many things affect cognition. By managing them, cognition generally improves. Since many of these factors are connected, a positive change in one area can have an effect in other areas, resulting in an even bigger impact on cognition.

General strategies that help

Here are some general ways or ‘strategies’ to manage cognitive changes following your COVID-19 illness:

1. Use ‘pacing’ to make the best use of your energy across the day and week.
2. Avoid drugs and alcohol.
3. Make sure you are managing stress.
4. Pay attention to your mood and sleep.
5. Get regular, safe amounts of physical exercise that don’t flare your symptoms.
6. Remind yourself it is normal to have cognitive slips sometimes.



Specific strategies

Here are some more detailed tips for managing cognitive difficulties:

1. Break difficult tasks into smaller steps and write them down.
2. Use a calendar or day planner to keep track of appointments.
3. Set reminders on your phone.
4. Keep your environment tidy.
5. Keep important things like your wallet and keys in the same place.
6. If you are stuck for a word, try thinking of a similar word, or describing the word.
7. Reduce distractions when you are trying to concentrate (e.g. turn off the radio, go to a quiet corner).
8. Focus on one task at a time.
9. Choose a time when you are most alert to take on challenging mental tasks.
10. Ask someone for help if you need it.



Talk to your Primary Care Provider if your cognitive function is not improving. They can discuss symptom management with you or make a referral if needed.

Remember that practicing diligent pacing strategies and staying within your energy envelope is an effective way of managing brain fog.

For more information on how to support your understanding and management of symptoms as you recover from COVID-19, please visit www.phsa.ca/health-info/post-covid-19-care-recovery