



CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

Learning About Chemo Brain

Your Kaiser Permanente Care Instructions

Chemo brain is a problem with thinking and memory that can happen during and especially after chemotherapy treatment for cancer. It can make it hard for you to think, concentrate, and do tasks. You may have trouble remembering things. And you may feel like your brain isn't working right.

It can be frightening to have this happen, especially during an already stressful time. These problems can be mild. But they can be so serious that people have a hard time working or doing their daily activities.

What causes chemo brain?

These thinking and memory problems may be caused by chemotherapy medicines used to treat cancer. They could occur because of the cancer itself and maybe because of other medicines used to treat cancer. The anxiety and stress of having cancer also may make it harder to think and remember.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms vary depending on the person. But you may:

- Forget events, names, or other things.
- Have trouble thinking of certain words when you talk.
- Have trouble learning new things.
- Take longer to do routine tasks.
- Have trouble concentrating or feel like your mind is in a fog.

How is chemo brain treated?

Chemo brain may go away when treatment ends. If you are still having chemotherapy, your doctor may try a different type of chemo to see if that stops these problems or causes fewer problems.

If your symptoms are mild, they may go away without treatment. If your symptoms are very bad, your doctor may suggest that you see a specialist who is an expert in thinking and memory problems.

What can you do to cope?

Take care of yourself

- Try to relax to reduce your stress. Meditate, or do yoga or another relaxing activity.
- Try to be patient with yourself. The problem may go away with time.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Be as physically active as you can. But check with your doctor to make sure that you don't do too much too soon.
- Keep your brain active by reading and doing puzzles, games, or crosswords.

Use memory aids

- Use sticky notes and calendars to help you remember events and tasks.
- Carry a notebook to write down important dates, to-do lists, and names of people.
- Try to have a routine for daily tasks so you get used to doing the same things in the same order every day.
- Bring a family member or friend to doctor visits. Or use your phone or another device to record your talk with your doctor.
- Keep a diary or journal. Write down when your mind feels the most clear and when you have trouble. Note how much sleep you had, if you were stressed, or other things that happened.

Seek support

- Tell your family and close friends about the problem so they know what's going on if you forget words or seem foggy. Suggest ways they can help you.
- See an oncology social worker if you are having trouble coping with memory problems.

Learning About Chemo Brain (Page 3 of 3)

- Think about joining a support group for people in cancer treatment. They may have the same problems. You can share ideas.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

Enter **Q698** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Chemo Brain.**"

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