

Memory Issues

The human brain is like a powerful computer that stores our memory and controls how we think and react. People diagnosed with a brain tumour often suffer short-term memory loss and it is a frequent challenge in their everyday life. Some short-term memory loss may get better with time, but all too frequently it becomes a permanent reality of daily life.

There are many tools that can be used to help adapt to short-term memory loss. Below are some tips that may help when you are experiencing difficulties.

- Write things down. Carry a pad and pencil in your pocket or purse.
- Keep a pad of paper beside all telephones.
- Keep a calendar or daily planner of your activities.
- Put a blackboard/white board in your kitchen.
- Use an alarm clock, a watch alarm, or a stove timer to remind you of a task.
- Ask others to help you with reminders.
- Use calendars or planners to help keep yourself on track.
- Make lists or use a chart board.
- Schedule difficult tasks when you're feeling your best.
- Try stress-relief techniques, visualizations, meditation, yoga, or Pilates.

Changes with memory can bring up safety concerns. Below are some helpful tips:

Emergency information:

- For quick access to phone numbers and health information, create a list and let others know where this information is located.
- Keep a list of important phone numbers in your wallet/purse/bag.
- Wear an ID bracelet that includes health information.

Kitchen Safety:

- When cooking, use a timer with an alarm that needs to be manually turned off.
- Consider electric appliances that turn off by themselves i.e.: coffee maker, kettle.

Medicine Safety:

- Use a pill box to organize your meds.
- Use an alarm that reminds you to take your meds.

Driving Safety:

- Put away your cell phone when driving.
- Use GPS systems to find your way.
- Have someone regularly assess your driving.

The decision to stop driving is often a very difficult one. For your safety and the safety of others it is important to have someone you trust assess your driving regularly to ensure that you remain safe behind the wheel.

Living alone:

- It is important that you create a support system.
- Reach out to those you trust, ask if you can call them if you need to.
- Get involved in community activities/support groups.
- Consider alternative living options if it becomes too difficult to live alone.

Remaining close to loved ones:

- Encourage your friends and family to learn about your condition.

- Talk openly about your worries.
- Explain what type of support you need and don't need.
- Find ways to enjoy each other.
- Show affection in new ways i.e.: hugging, holding hands.
- Accept change and learn new things together.

Advocating for yourself:

- If you feel that you are being overlooked, let others know you need to say something.
- Let others know to address you and not just your partner.
- Be straightforward with what support you would like and not like.
- It's okay to say, "I can do this on my own."
- When comfortable, share with others that you are dealing with memory loss.
- Join a support group to connect others who understand what you are going through.

Supporting a loved one with memory loss:

- Stay in the moment and let go of expectations.
- Validate thoughts and feelings.
- Value the input of your loved one.

Caring for yourself while caring for a loved one:

- Join a support group with others in similar situations.
- Take breaks and let go of guilt while doing so.
- Accept help from others / ask others for help.
- Be okay with not being perfect.
- Do one thing every day for YOU.
- Stay on top of your own health.

Below are some ideas that can help in your day-to-day life.

Remaining close to loved ones:

- Think about what your plans are that day, write it down and put it somewhere you won't miss it.
- Keep lists in a notebook, shop online (shopping history will make it easy to order).
- Create a set routine to make it easier to remember your day. Include time to rest.

- Leave items you use regularly in the same place i.e.: keys, wallet, phone, glasses, meds.
- Use labels for drawers and cupboards, purge unnecessary items.
- Colour code your keys.
- Leave yourself reminder notes by the door, kitchen, bedroom.
- Reduce noise and distractions.
- Use your phone as a tool. Access the alarm, calendar, reminders, add photos, create contacts.
- Use pill boxes.
- Locator devices can be attached to items such as keys or wallet.
- Avoid multitasking and break things down into small steps.
- Avoid searching for a word and try to describe what you mean.
- If you can't remember why you went into a room, go back to where you were when you decided to go into the room and retrace your steps. It can help jog your memory.
- To remember your day, talk about it with others, write it down or document it on your phone.

Take care of yourself:

- Exercise has been shown to help memory and thinking.
- Eat regular, balanced meals. Make sure to drink lots of water. Alcohol in moderation.
- Take breaks and rest throughout the day if possible. Try to get a good night's sleep.
- Keep your brain active by using all your senses.
- Stay social. Keep in touch with friends and family.
- Try to stay relaxed with a variety of techniques:
 - Slow breathing.
 - Muscle relaxation
 - Guided imagery
 - Listen to relaxing music and/or sounds.
- Speak to your healthcare team with any concerns.

Resources:

<https://www.thebraintumourcharity.org/>
<http://depts.washington.edu/mbwc/resources/living-with-memory-loss>
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/alzheimers-disease/expert-answers/alzheimers-disease/faq-20057881#:~:text=Exercising%20several%20times%20a%20week,disease%20or%20mild%20cognitive%20impairment>