

Brain Fog and Cognitive Issues

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What is brain fog?

Brain fog describes issues with your cognition or thinking processes.

With long COVID, there is usually no damage to the brain tissue. However, long COVID can affect how the brain executes tasks on a chemical and cellular level.

If we use a computer analogy, the hardware isn't damaged, but the software is lagging or out of date.





What happens when you have brain fog?

1. You might not be able to pay attention or concentrate as well.
2. You might feel more sensitive to light and sounds.

3. You might feel that you are slower to think and respond than usual.
4. You might find it difficult to read or watch television.
5. You might find it difficult to remember recent events or details.
6. You might find it difficult to plan or stay organized.
7. You might find it difficult to find the right words or carry on a conversation.

What can you do?

If you have brain fog, it helps to follow a curative approach, meaning take care of your long COVID as a whole. In long COVID, symptoms, including brain fog, tend to get worse by over-exerting yourself (physically, cognitively, or socially/emotionally). Therefore, pacing and taking frequent rest breaks can be effective ways to reduce these symptoms.

Some ways to help your overall recovery and brain fog are:

- Pacing yourself (see also [Pacing](#) for more)
- Managing your stress levels
- Staying within your “energy envelope” (tolerance levels) (see also [Fatigue](#) for more about this)
- Getting lots of sleep and rest (see also [Sleep Hygiene](#) for more)

Cognitively demanding tasks such as learning, planning, problem-solving, or holding conversation can be very draining of your energy – so can spending time on screens or in busy environments. Remember to take breaks and pace yourself.

It can be tempting to “test yourself,” for example by quizzing yourself or practicing puzzles. However, doing this can tire you out, make your symptoms worse, increase your stress levels, or lower your mood.

What can you do?

Developing your own system for keeping organized and following a routine will help with brain fog overall, but here are some other suggestions that may help you.

Pace yourself with mental tasks:

- Allow yourself extra time to complete a task.
- Take brain “micro breaks” when doing mentally demanding activities. For example, lean back, close your eyes, feel your feet on the floor, and quiet your mind by counting your breaths backwards from 10, or listen to a clip of a nature soundtrack for 30 seconds to a minute.
- Take longer rest breaks in between activities throughout the day. For example, lie down in a quiet room, practice breathing exercises for relaxation, meditation, or guided mental imagery for 10 to 30 minutes.
- Plan to do more important work at a time of day when you feel more energized and alert and when you are in a quiet, distraction-free environment.
- Avoid multi-tasking.

- Try to follow the same routines from day to day to avoid getting mixed up or disoriented.
- Find a quiet place to help you focus on an important mental task.

Use tools to help you cope with brain fog:

- Set alarms or use sticky-notes as reminders.
- Use a day planner with a to-do list.
- Carry a notebook with you to write down things you want to remember.
- Ask other people to write down important information for you and remind you about important dates or events.

Where to next?

- Learn more about [Pacing](#), [Fatigue](#) and [Sleep Hygiene](#) in *MyGuide*.
- Learn more about [Concussion](#) in MyGuide Concussion.
- Watch [this video](#) by Mayo Clinic on Brain Fog.

