



# Long COVID Service

## Negotiating Brain Fog

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## What is brain fog?

Some people who have had COVID may struggle with what has been called 'brain fog.' This is not a medical or scientific term; but is used by individuals to describe how they feel when their thinking is sluggish, fuzzy, and not sharp.

Cognition involves the three main areas of memory, thought processing and attention, and the mental processes enabled by each of these areas allows us to perform meaningful actions and behaviours in daily life.

All of those cognitive processes that seemed to work automatically for you in the past, have become a problem since COVID. The exact reason why this happens is unclear. We continue to learn about the impact of this condition on patients.

Just like physical fatigue, mental fatigue can also impact on a person's ability to do complete daily tasks/ things that we usually take for granted such as managing money, reading, making shopping lists, speaking with people or it may be affecting your ability to return to work.

Brain fog is thought to have both physiological and psychological factors playing a role. Some studies have shown that it could be the immune system causing an inflammatory response in the brain, contributing to brain fog and such difficulties as memory, planning and concentration.

## Some common symptoms of brain fog include:

- **Difficulties remembering** – such as remembering words or day to day activities/ processes
- **Problems with thought processing and communication** – such as following conversations or tasks which involve problem solving
- **Issues with attention and concentration** – difficulty to concentrate for prolonged periods or in busy or loud environments



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These are some ways you can help yourself with brain fog. Different techniques will work for different people – it's very individual, so may require some trial and error.

### Strategies to help with memory problems

- Chunking – grouping information into smaller chunks which makes it easier to remember
- Repetition – helps to 'encode' more efficiently
- Mental images to remember something e.g. bright colours
- Use of imagery, pictures as reminders; write lists

### Strategies to help with thought processing and communication

- When speaking, take your time and do not rush
- Let people know you have Long COVID and how it is affecting you
- Let people know you are tired and may need to reduce the time you are communicating with them, but you will talk to them when you have more energy
- Schedule interactions for when you usually have more energy
- Take your time to understand information to reduce overuse of your energy
- Write information down on paper or use your mobile phone
- Describe what you are trying to say

### Tips to help with attention difficulties

- Focus on one thing at a time, give it your full attention and set yourself a time limit
- Reduce or shut out distractions
- Balance your activities between physical, cognitive and relaxing ones
- Take regular breaks
- Engage with activities when you are less tired but maintain your limit to avoid boom and bust episodes
- Reduce stress worry and tension by using relaxation techniques



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## Further Resources

- [www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk](http://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk)
- [www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus)
- <https://www.rcot.co.uk/recovering-covid-19-post-viral-fatigue-and-conserving-energy>  
Royal college occupational therapy site for managing fatigue post COVID
- Living with worry and anxiety amidst global uncertainty.  
<https://www.psychologytools.com/articles/free-guide-to-living-with-worry-and-anxiety-amidst-global-uncertainty/>
- Mental Health Foundation. How to look after your mental health during the coronavirus outbreak. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus>
- Mind. Coronavirus and your mental health  
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/>



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