



# Cognitive problems post Covid-19

The road to recovery following covid-19 can take time, with the condition affecting each individual differently. People are often well aware of the physical issues that can persist after Covid infection, and you might already be receiving support for these. In addition to this, we now know that some people will notice changes in cognition (thinking skills) and emotional wellbeing as they recover from Covid-19

We cannot always tell how long these problems will go on for, though we are seeing that with good self care and pacing most people can start getting back to normal activities within a few months. This leaflet will tell you about some of the most common “hidden” problems, and provide useful tips and strategies to help you through this uncertain time.

## **What are the cognitive symptoms?**

Many people will notice no cognitive changes after covid, but some people experiencing long covid may notice one or more of these symptoms in the early weeks and months:

- Memory problems
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Difficulties with planning and organising
- Communication difficulties

These symptoms can often be described as “brain fog” and differ with each person’s experience.

These symptoms may affect your daily life in various ways, such as:

- Remembering names, dates and appointments
- Holding your concentration on a book, TV programme or conversation.
- Planning daily tasks such as preparing a meal or forgetting what stage in a task you were at.
- Getting your words out straight away during a conversation or thinking of specific words.
- Returning to work and completing your usual work duties.

For most people these symptoms will gradually improve, but it is important not to put pressure on yourself to get back to “normal” too quickly. Setting yourself small goals and pacing yourself will help your recovery.

## **Here are some suggestions of things you can do to help you manage your symptoms:**

### **Memory Problems**

- Use calendars and set reminders of upcoming events/appointments, and use diary and list “apps” on your mobile or tablet
- Use visual cues such as post it notes around the home, e.g. to remind you to lock the door

## Attention and Concentration

- Begin a task when you feel fresh and stop when your attention fades
- Break down tasks into manageable chunks and do one step at a time.

## Planning and Organising

- Try to establish a daily routine and stick to it.
- Use “To Do” lists or make a “step by step” guide to help plan tasks

## Communication Difficulties

- Play word games and complete crosswords/puzzles
- If you can't think of a word try describing it to prompt you. i.e. “you put things in it” to describe a box

## Where to find more help and advice

- There are no exact rules and each person will recover in their own way in their own time and some may need more help than others
- Take care of yourself by trying to avoid any stressful situations and if possible allowing yourself extra time to relax. Stress and fatigue can worsen cognitive problems
- Have an open discussion with your employer about your symptoms so they can support you to return to work at a pace that you are comfortable with.

In your first appointments with the long covid team we will ask more questions about your symptoms to find out if you may need some additional help with cognitive symptoms as you recover. In the meantime these websites also give some information on what to expect and strategies that you can try yourself.

<https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/>

<https://php.cumbria.nhs.uk/patients/resources/neuropsychology>

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