

Brain fog and COVID-19

What you need to know

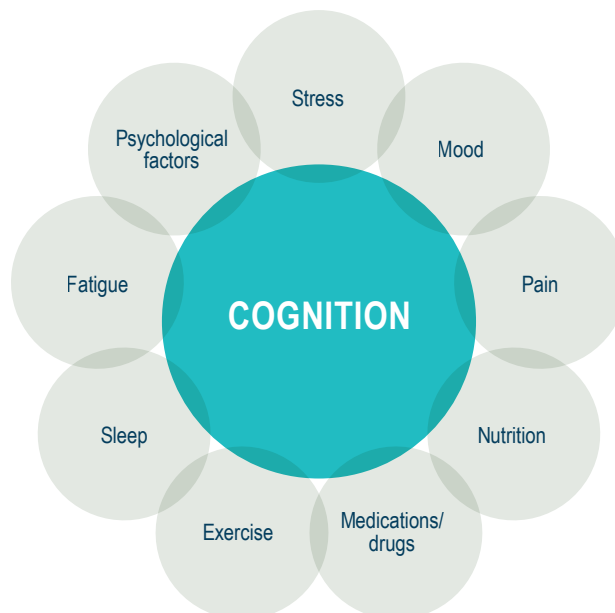
What is it?

During COVID-19 recovery, many patients say they experience something called “brain fog.”

Brain fog can take several forms, including:

- Mental fatigue;
- Problems with attention;
- Frequent forgetfulness;
- Memory loss;
- Problems with concentration;
- Thinking in slow motion or not feeling sharp;
- Problems with planning, organizing, and problem-solving.

Many things affect cognition, as shown in this image.



It's important to know that some of these factors can make your symptoms seem more intense or last longer. For example, if you already have learning difficulties or problems sleeping, if you feel more anxious than usual, or if you're in pain, the brain fog may be worse.

However, these factors and symptoms are all connected, so a positive change in one area (e.g., better sleep) can have an effect in other areas or symptoms (e.g., fatigue and problems concentrating). You'll see more benefits when you apply multiple strategies that work together.

General strategies

Here are some general ways to help **you manage brain fog**:

1. Use pacing strategies (see **Fatigue et COVID-19** and **Mental health and COVID-19** information sheets). to make the best use of your energy throughout the day and week. Pay attention to your sleep;
2. Pay attention to your mood, and give yourself downtime, as needed;
3. Avoid drugs and alcohol;
4. Remind yourself that it's normal to have cognitive slips sometimes;
5. Accept the fact that everyone recovers at their own pace.

Specific strategies

Here are some more detailed tips for **managing brain fog**:

1. Break difficult tasks into smaller steps and write them down;
2. Use a calendar or day planner to keep track of appointments;
3. Set reminders on your phone or other device;
4. Keep your environment tidy;
5. Keep important things like your wallet and keys in the same place;
6. If you are stuck for a word, try thinking of a similar word, or describing the word;
7. Reduce distractions when you are trying to concentrate (e.g., turn off the TV, go to a quiet corner);
8. Focus on one task at a time;
9. Choose a time when you are most alert to take on challenging mental tasks;
10. Ask someone for help if you need it. Don't hesitate to share these information sheets with your family and friends to help them understand what's going on and give you the help you need;
11. Talk to your doctor or a health professional if your brain fog doesn't improve. They can tell you ways to manage your symptoms and refer you to another professional, as needed.

Reference:

Post COVID-19 Interdisciplinary Clinical Care Network. (2021, 22 mars). *Brain Fog in Post COVID-19 Recovery*. http://www.phsa.ca/health-info-site/Documents/post_covid-19_brain_fog.pdf

*Most symptoms of long COVID improve over time.
Be patient and kind to yourself.*

If you have questions about long COVID, please email us at: readaptation.covid.ciSSsmo16@ssss.gouv.qc.ca.

Our mission

To maintain, improve, and restore the health and well-being of the Québec population by making accessible an array of integrated and quality health and social services, while contributing to the social and economic development of Québec.

Our vision

Accessible and efficient health care and services that adapt to the needs of Québécois.

Our goals

The CISSS de la Montérégie-Ouest achieves its goals through its innovative approaches and stands apart through:

- its exemplary offer of care and integrated services based on interdisciplinarity, accessibility, and adaptability to the needs of its population;
- its willingness to question and improve its professional, clinical, and administrative practices;
- its appreciation of its personnel and the implementation of human resource management practices;
- its strong relationships with its partners.

Our values

Our actions are guided by five equal and interconnected values: compassion, collaboration, commitment, confidence and consistency.