



TORRANCE MEMORIAL

CANCER SURVIVORSHIP PROGRAM

A PARTNER WITH THE UCLA-LIVESTRONG™ CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR PROGRAM COGNITIVE DYSFUNCTION (“CHEMO BRAIN”)

- “Chemo brain” is a term used to describe changes in memory, attention, concentration, etc. Problems such as these can develop as a result of cancer treatment. The medical term for this type of problem is cognitive dysfunction.
- It is estimated that about 50% of patients who have received chemotherapy for breast cancer experience problems with brain function.
- Traditional chemotherapy drugs, especially in higher doses, and hormonal agents have been linked with development of “chemo brain”. Patients with a history of traumatic brain injury or learning disability may be more at risk for development of “chemo brain”.
- Fatigue, depression and anxiety may make “chemo brain” worse.
- Thinking problems related to chemotherapy can linger for years although they tend to get better over time and may eventually go away completely.
- There is no known treatment for “chemo brain”. Although research into this area is in its infancy, certain behavioral strategies might help patients compensate for deficits so that they can function at work, home, etc. These strategies include making lists, written reminders, using a day planner to stay organized, and establishing a routine.
- Activities that “exercise” memory and thinking, like memory games, crossword puzzles, etc., might enhance recovery of mental acuity. Healthy living that includes regular exercise, relaxation and avoidance of fatigue can reduce stress and improve overall functioning.

MY ACTION PLAN

EXERCISE

- Make exercise a normal part of my daily routine (minimum 30 minutes three times per week).
- Check with my physician before I start my exercise program.
- Personal goal: _____

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- Take care of myself by eating a healthy diet, controlling stress, and getting adequate rest.
Personal goal: _____
- Set aside some time each day for an activity that promotes my relaxation like massage, meditation, yoga, etc.
- Investigate games, books and activities that stimulate and challenge my use of language, memory, learning and completion of multi-step tasks.
- Keep a sense of humor and resolve not to get frustrated since my mental functioning will likely improve over time.
- Share my concerns about any thinking or concentration problems I might be having with my physician.

Other:

TO LEARN MORE

Chemobrain

American Cancer Society: Chemo Brain

<http://www.cancer.org/Treatment/TreatmentsandSideEffects/PhysicalSideEffects/ChemotherapyEffects/chemo-brain>

American Cancer Society: Seeking Solutions to 'Chemo-Brain'

http://ww3.cancer.org/docroot/NWS/content/NWS_2_1x_Seeking_Solutions_to_Chemo-Brain.asp

Chemocare.com: Managing Side Effects: Chemo Brain

http://www.chemocare.com/managing/chemobrain_how_to_identify_and.asp

Chemobraininfo.org

www.chemobraininfo.org

Fitness and Exercise

Torrance Memorial

http://torrancememorial.org/Health_Education/Fitness_Exercise.aspx

Therapeutic Body Work

Beach Cities Health District

<http://bchd.org>

Cancer Support Community, South Bay Cities
(formerly The Wellness Community)

<http://cancersupportredondobeach.org>

Torrance Memorial Therapeutic Body Work Series

http://torrancememorial.org/Health_Education/Therapeutic_Body_Work_Series.aspx