

WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR MEMORY

Concussion/Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center



Changes in your brain after a mild traumatic brain injury (also known as a concussion) can affect the way your brain receives, stores and retrieves information. These changes can slow your thinking and make it harder to stay focused, which can impact your ability to remember information.

TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR MEMORY:

- **Avoid distractions.** When you are learning new information, focus on what is being said. Pay close attention when you are receiving instructions or having a conversation.
- **Write it down.** Keep a planner or calendar with you to write down important events or tasks. Keeping a daily or weekly journal can help you retain memories and process feelings.
- **Prioritize.** Make a list of things you need to take care of, list them in order of importance, and check them off as you complete them.
- **Maintain a routine.** Being consistent can improve your ability to remember information. For example, keep your keys in the same spot every day, take your medication at the same time each day, and park in the same areas.
- **Stay mentally active.** Reading, playing card games and completing crossword puzzles are great ways to keep your mind active.
- **Lower your stress level.** Don't take on too much at one time. Keep stress to a minimum by staying on top of important tasks. Learn to say "no" when you start to feel overwhelmed, and ask for help when you need it. Try relaxing with guided meditation, yoga or listening to music.
- **Allow extra time for tasks.** Understand that certain things may take longer than they used to, and allow extra time to complete those tasks. Break tasks down into smaller steps if necessary.

TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR MEMORY (CONTINUED):

- **Get plenty of sleep.** Try to get at least seven hours of sleep on a regular basis. Sleep is important in preparing the brain for learning and remembering new information.
- **Avoid alcohol, tobacco and caffeine** (coffee, soda, tea and energy drinks). These can increase sleep problems, anxiety, blood pressure levels and overall stress.
- **Stay physically active.** Regular exercise helps prevent fatigue and improves concentration. Consult your health care provider before returning to physical activity. It is best to return to exercise gradually.
- **Eat healthy foods.** Eat high-quality foods regularly. Fish, colorful fruits and vegetables, milk, eggs, whole grain breads, nuts and beans all help to keep the brain and body healthy.

TALK TO YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER IF YOU:

- Have memory problems that make you unsafe.
- Are experiencing disruptions in your daily life.
- Are having a hard time taking care of yourself or your family.
- Are having a difficult time completing familiar tasks.
- Are experiencing increased anxiety, depression or aggression.

RESOURCES

Scan the code below
to access VA apps



Scan the code below to access
Military Health System apps



The DoD and VA provide several free resources that can help you improve your memory.

1. **Virtual Hope Box:** Contains simple tools to help users with coping, relaxation, distraction, and positive thinking using personalized audio, video, pictures, games (sudoku, word search and mahjong solitaire) mindfulness exercises (guided meditation), activity planning, inspirational quotes and coping statements.
2. **Mindfulness Coach:** Provides nine different guided mindfulness exercises and strategies for overcoming challenges to mindfulness practice.
3. **Moving Forward:** Tools to keep you moving forward in times of stress.