

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225) to make an appointment.

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Cancer Center

[Make an Appointment](#)

[Back](#)

[Managing Symptoms & Side Effects](#)

[Brain & Spinal Cord Treatment](#)

[Refer a Patient](#)

ABOUT US

[Our mission, vision & core values](#)

[Leadership](#)

[History](#)

[Equality, diversity & inclusion](#)

[Annual report](#)

[Give to MSK](#)

experiencing.

Causes of Cognitive Changes with Brain Tumors

If you have been diagnosed with and treated for a brain tumor, there are many potential causes of cognitive changes. These include the location of the tumor itself and the effects of radiation therapy and chemotherapy treatments. Seizures and the potential side effects of antiseizure medications may also contribute to changes in your cognitive skills. Other medical conditions and changes in your mood (such as depression) may play a role as well. Depending on the cause, the cognitive changes may persist or worsen over time.

Causes of Cognitive Changes with Other Types of Cancer

Regardless of where your tumor is located, cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and hormone therapy, as well as stress and emotional reactions related to your treatment, can result in cognitive changes. Unrelated medical or neurological conditions may also play a role. Depending on the cause, the symptoms may be short-lived or long lasting.

Types of Cognitive Problems

Cognitive changes can be obvious to others, or they can be so subtle that your coworkers, friends, and family fail to notice them. You may find it difficult to:

- Concentrate and pay attention
- Process thoughts quickly
- Multitask
- Learn and recall new information
- Find words and remember names

Your lifestyle may influence how much these changes have an impact on your daily living. If you are retired and have a more flexible schedule, you might find these symptoms easy to manage.

However, if you are working, parenting, or running a household, a change in your cognitive abilities may cause you significant distress. You may notice

that you can handle one task without problems, but you become overwhelmed with multiple tasks, distractions, and deadlines.

Evaluating Your Symptoms

Our neuropsychology experts begin a typical appointment by reviewing your medical and personal history, as well as your symptoms. Next, they use verbal and written tests to evaluate your attention, memory, language skills, and mood. The assessment will be tailored to your particular situation, and may take up to several hours to complete.

Coping with Cognitive Changes

If a neuropsychological evaluation indicates that you have cognitive difficulties, our experts can recommend strategies for helping you manage your everyday life. They can also discuss any accommodations you may require at work or school due to your cognitive changes. In some cases, medications may be available to lessen certain aspects of your cognitive difficulties.

Our team may also recommend cognitive rehabilitation, and they can refer you to an appropriate specialist who will teach you techniques to compensate for your specific problems.

Research Activities

Our neuropsychologists are involved in several research studies on cognitive difficulties associated with cancer and its treatment. Learn more about our research in the [Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences](#) and the [Department of Neurology](#).

Contact Us

If you are concerned about cognitive changes associated with your cancer diagnosis and treatment, you can talk with your Memorial Sloan Kettering care team about a referral, or contact the Neuropsychology Service directly at [212-610-0489](tel:212-610-0489).

Our team of neuropsychologists includes [Denise D. Correa](#), [James C. Root](#), and [Elizabeth L. Ryan](#).

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[Nutrition & cancer](#)

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