

Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

Editor's Note: Content presented in the Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog is for awareness and informational purposes only, and it is not meant to be a diagnostic tool.

What is “Brain Fog” and what can be done about it? We all experience “Brain Fog” sometime in our lives. I know that I have. There are times when we may forget certain things on our grocery list, forget to respond to an email, misplace our keys or what we came into a room for. After all, the human brain wasn't designed to run at its peak 24/7! Maybe we forget certain things on our grocery list, forget to respond to an email, misplace our keys or what we came into a room for. When you look up the common symptoms of “Brain Fog” on various medical websites you will discover examples such as this:

- Memory problems
- Inability to focus or concentrate
- Difficulty processing information
- Trouble problem-solving
- Feelings of confusion or disorientation
- Trouble finding words
- lack of mental clarity

“Brain Fog” is not a medical term or a medical condition itself, but rather it is a symptom that relates to other chronic medical conditions such as epilepsy, chemotherapy, and fibromyalgia. According to Tiffany Kairos, besides seizures, “Brain Fog” is one of the most difficult – and sometimes exhausting – parts of living with epilepsy. “Brain Fog” is more than just the occasional forgetfulness. “Brain Fog” is the general term used to explain a dysfunction in focus, learning, and/or memory that can cause brief episodes of confusion and disorientation. Tiffany Kairos writes that it is unclear whether the “Brain Fog” that accompanies epilepsy is a side effect of seizure medication or of the actual seizures.

Incredibly, little information is provided about “Brain Fog” and its association with epilepsy. When you look up what conditions are associated with “Brain Fog” on medical websites, you will not see epilepsy listed. However, you will see “Brain Fog” associated with the following medical conditions:

- Anemia
- Depression
- Diabetes
- Alzheimer's Disease
- Hypothyroidism
- Lupus
- Arthritis
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Fibromyalgia

- Migraines
- Cancer

While medication taken for seizures can cause “Brain Fog”, the onset of seizures in the left temporal lobe provides us with additional insight into why “Brain Fog” happens. Our ability to process language resides in the left temporal lobe. The two main areas for processing language are Broca’s area and Wernicke’s area.

Broca’s area located just above the front of the left temporal lobe oversees our expressive language ability. Broca’s area oversees speaking, understanding, and storing words. Broca’s area receives information from the many parts of the brain where words are stored. It then sends this information to the part of the brain that controls your mouth. When Broca’s area is impacted, our expressive language abilities diminish. Just because you may know the name of an object, the part of the brain that knows cannot tell the rest of your brain. The name is lost. Thus, “Brain Fog” creeps in.

Another area impacted by left temporal lobe seizures is Wernicke’s area which is located on the top part of the temporal lobe. Wernicke’s area is the center for incoming words and facilitates our receptive language skills. It helps us to understand words that we hear or read. When you hear and understand words, phrases, and sentences, it is because Wernicke’s area has done its job. When Wernicke’s area is impacted by seizures, our ability to get meaning from what is told to us is diminished. “Brain Fog” hinders us from comprehending what is being said to us,

OK, I have “Brain Fog”. Now what do I do? Here are 7 things that **only you** may be able to understand about “Brain Fog”:

It is Unpredictable

Much like the weather, you cannot predict the severity of the fog. It can swiftly change from one minute to the next. Some days, you can articulate yourself well. Other days, your mind is moving at a snail’s pace struggling to recall the point to my conversation.

What’s That Word Again?

Forgetting words or choosing the wrong word is a common symptom of “Brain Fog”. When the fog rolls in, it is as if all the words that you can comprehend have been scattered in your brain. You can sense the word that you want to use, but I cannot seem to verbalize it. You are at a standstill searching for that word or an alternative but cannot seem to grasp it.

Forget About It

“Brain Fog” is centered around forgetfulness: Forgetting words, losing your train of thought, things on your to-do list or why you walked into a room. Always check your calendar in addition to your phone’s calendar. If not checked regularly, you can potentially miss something important.

Attempting to Explain It – In the Middle of It – Is Tough Stuff

It is no easy task describing what “Brain Fog” is in the middle of an episode. Even when those around us are well aware of our cognitive difficulties, it can be difficult to let them know what is

happening. If you are experiencing “Brain Fog” you might consider using hand gestures to signal what is happening, what you want, need, or mean to say.... or extend a thumbs up to assure the person you are speaking with that you are alright.

You are Always Second-Guessing

If you are not familiar with “Brain Fog”, imagine feeling like your eyelids are heavy with exhaustion but wondering if you had turned off the stove or locked the door. Now imagine, that is your every day. Questions like “Did I take my medicine this morning?” linger in the back of your mind. Besides alarms, oftentimes this means we have set in place routines such as taking our medicine after breakfast. Still, that does not completely stop the question from popping up.

It is A No-Win Situation of Frustration

Dealing with “Brain Fog” can be frustrating. Getting flustered just seems to escalate the symptoms. It becomes even more of a challenge to express yourself. During episodes of heightened fogginess, it helps me to take time to decompress and regroup.

Yes, It Can Be Embarrassing

It is embarrassing to know that you can accomplish the easiest of tasks only to have “Brain Fog” roll in and interfere. This is especially true if your profession relies on the capability to interact with the public. This can lead to self-criticisms which we often turn to when we are frustrated with ourselves. Positive self-talk helps shift focus away from getting down on ourselves and dwelling on things that are not in our control.

Below are some tips and tricks to help those with epilepsy to navigate through the “Brain Fog” we may experience.

Post Bright and Colorful Sticky Notes

By placing sticky notes on or around certain areas of the house, such as bedroom or bathroom mirrors, even on the refrigerator, are good ways to remind yourself of daily tasks, or upcoming appointments. Our days can get pretty busy. When the fog rolls in, it can derail us completely. Sticky notes help to get and keep us on track.

Take Notes on Your Phone

If you have a Smartphone, take notes! It is a great place for keeping lists and jotting down quick ideas.

Set Reminders on Your Phone

If you have a Smartphone, set a reminder so you never miss that appointment or event.

Mark Your Phone Calendar

Got a wall calendar? If so, make doubly sure you do not miss appointments and events with the calendar on your Smartphone! This feature can be a big help when it comes to dates and times of doctor appointments, events, and interviews.

Set Your Phone Alarm

I like the idea of a Smartphone alarm clock in comparison to a twin bell alarm clock, don't you? Use the Smartphone alarm as a reminder to take epilepsy medication each day at specific times of day which is incredibly important to avoid seizures.

Jot It Down

Writing by hand forces your brain to process information in a more detailed way, which helps you successfully load that information into your memory.

Self-Care Is A Must

"Brain Fog" is incredibly tough. One of the most important things to do is take care of yourself. It may very well ease the "Brain Fog" or at the very least, with how you manage.

If you have persistent lack of clarity that worsens or does not improve, See your doctor. A single test cannot diagnose "Brain Fog". "Brain Fog" may signal an underlying issue. You should let your doctor know about other symptoms you might have. For example, someone with hypothyroidism may have "Brain Fog" along with hair loss, dry skin, weight gain, or brittle nails.

Based on the results, your doctor will determine whether to investigate further. Other diagnostic tools may include imaging tests to look inside the body, such as X-rays, MRI, or CT scans. The doctor may also conduct allergy testing or a sleep study to check for a sleep disorder.

If your "Brain Fog" is making it difficult for you to go about your daily life, it is imperative to make an appointment to consult with your medical professional.

Editor's Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly.
Always remember – **CARPE DIEM – SEIZE THE DAY!**

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