



SELF HELP

# Managing memory problems

**Most people with Hughes/antiphospholipid syndrome will have some degree of memory loss and difficulty in thinking clearly; the sensation has been described as 'brain fog'.**

Memory loss can range from mild, such as difficulty finding words and absent-minded forgetfulness, to severe when people slur their speech or forget entire events such as holidays or well-travelled routes.

Living with short-term memory problems is a constant and very real challenge. Fortunately, there are a number of memory aids, strategies and safeguards you can employ to help you manage day-to-day.

- **Memory aids.** These are tools such as white/cork/notice boards, post-it notes, notebooks, memos, calendars, address books, electronic reminders in your computer/mobile phone/blackberry/iphone that help you organise tasks, remember birthdays, anniversaries and appointments. Try to get into a routine of using a memory aid which suits you and stick to that, so you don't have various bits of information in different places.
- **Strategies.** These are techniques which help your memory by using visual and/or auditory senses such as picturing a diagram/image or repeating key information aloud; making associations, for example, that Italy is shaped like a boot; focusing on one thing at a time, for example, before leaving a car park deliberately fix the location of the car in your mind; and mnemonic devices where you remember information by categories, rhymes or location such as Naughty Elephant Squirted Water to remember the north, east, south and west points on a compass.
- **Safeguards.** In addition to easing the burden on your memory by being organised, forming habits and working at remembering, it helps to keep your brain cells active as this may help prevent deterioration due to disuse. Activities which are good for the brain include keeping busy, staying physically fit, socialising, reducing stress, getting enough sleep, eating a balanced healthy diet. As memory involves concentration and organisation skills try playing mind-challenging games like chess and bridge, and solve puzzles such as crosswords and sudoku. It is also important to stimulate the brain so seek out new activities, adventures, concepts or hobbies.