Managing Cognitive Challenges
What do we mean by Cognition?

Cognition is the way we use our brains to think and learn. Injuries such as a concussion or other factors like lack of sleep, stress or poor diet can impact our ability to think clearly. In these situations, our brain pathways can become muddled, making thinking and learning more challenging.

When your cognitive abilities are impacted, you may experience difficulties with

- Memory recall
- Concentration and attention
- Getting things in the right order
- Understanding things
- Expressing what you mean

Recovery

Like all things, the time it takes to recover varies depending on the person and type of injury or reason for the cognitive challenges. Southern Rehab have a team of clinical experts who have helped many people recover from cognitive difficulties and they recommend the following actions to support your recovery:

Take a ‘Brain Break’

Our brains do everything for us; allowing us to move, speak, think and plan. So, taking several 10 minute ‘brain breaks’ a day, will give your brain a time out and help control the symptoms you experience.

It’s a good idea to aim for 3-5 brain breaks a day. Take the break in a quiet environment away from noise and distractions, simply sitting and resting (with eyes shut or staring at a blank wall), giving your brain a chance to have a break.
Pacing of Tasks
Your body and brain needs time to recover so it’s very important to pace yourself. We recommend you ‘chunk’ your daily activities into smaller and more manageable tasks.

Exercise
Light exercise such as leisurely walks can be very helpful. However, high-impact or strenuous exercise such as running is not recommended following a concussion or when you are experiencing cognitive difficulties.

Prompt your memory
You can reduce the stress on your brain by using simple but effective tools that will remind you of the tasks you need to complete each day. For example, have a notepad handy and write down your list of tasks or appointments each day. Set your clock or phone alarm to help you remember things such as when you are cooking or have an appointment.

Be in calm environments
It is important you are calm and for your brain to rest. So, if possible stay away from noise and stressful situations. Turning off background noise such as radio’s, TV and being removed from areas where people are talking will reduce clutter for your brain.

Other Useful Tips:
> Avoid caffeine or alcohol while recovering.
> Try to get in a schedule of going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.
> Minimise the time you spend on screens (including computers, TV, smart phones and tablets) as these devices are hard work for the brain.