

BRAIN INJURY

WHAT IT IS & WHAT NOW?

An acquired brain injury (ABI) occurs when the brain is injured after birth, often resulting in changes to how a person thinks, acts, and feels.

Different parts of the brain are responsible for different functions a person can perform or experience, such as a person's movements, emotions, processing sounds/sights, starting or holding a conversation, and being able to pay attention or remember information.

Certain tasks may be more challenging than prior to injury. Repetitive training and strategies to compensate or adapt for change in function can form new brain pathways, assisting with learning and rehabilitation.



DID YOU KNOW? NOT ALL BRAIN INJURIES ARE THE SAME

NON- TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

caused by changes occurring inside of the body (such as stroke, substance overdose, lack of oxygen, or brain tumors).

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)

result of forces outside the body - a bump, jolt, or blow to the head (such as falls, motor vehicle collisions, assaults, or blasts).

COMMON CHANGES



PHYSICAL & SENSORY

(how your muscles or bodily health is affected)

- seizures
- fatigue & sleep disruption
- headaches & pain
- weakness or paralysis
- movement & coordination
- sexual function
- balance
- sensory changes (sight, smell, hearing, etc.)



THINKING & PROCESSING

(how you process and engage with your environment)

- memory or recall
- mental flexibility & learning
- attention & concentration
- initiation & motivation
- task-switching & sequencing
- mental fatigue
- safety awareness & impulsivity
- problem-solving & decisions
- social skills & communication



EMOTIONS & BEHAVIOR

(how you feel & act that may be different than before)

- difficulty with regulation (emotions or actions)
- self-awareness
- irritability or restlessness
- unrelated laughter or crying
- personality changes
- lethargy or slowness
- psychological conditions (depression, anxiety, etc.)

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Many changes after a brain injury are not seen on the outside but can be all-consuming on the inside. Sometimes stigma or assumptions about people living with brain injury can affect independence or how someone engages in their community. Developing strategies as well as empowering yourself and others are key for living well after injury. Though it may feel like a long process, growth and change after brain injury can be possible with patience, flexibility, and when even the small victories are celebrated.



Create structure & keep routines with scheduled breaks

- Minimize distractions/clutter and break tasks, goals, or instructions into smaller, realistic ones.
- Consistency & a schedule can help with memory and reducing confusion.

Connect with resources & people

- Prevent any feeling of isolation by linking with supports in the area or online.
- Identify what you need with self-care to prevent burnout, fatigue, and frustration.

Try, adapt, and modify - Every person is different

- Use planners, labeling, color-coded systems, notebooks, Smartphone apps, communication books, etc. to help with everyday tasks.
- If something doesn't work or fit, brainstorm ways to modify it for the person.
- Seek out independent living or employment specialists for assistive technology or tools.

Practice creativity and flexibility in rehabilitation

- Make opportunities out of every activity or chore into practicing a skill.
- Use repetition, rephrasing, and cueing while providing written, accessible handouts.

Educate, then advocate

- Educate yourself and others on brain injury to advocate for your needs and services.
- Look online for resources, events, education, committees, and more.

Be proactive in solving problems & plan ahead

- Offer or ask for on-the-spot, specific feedback (what do you want vs. do not).
- Create plans or develop alternative strategies for escalating mood/behavior.
- Investigate behaviors for what they are trying to communicate (a need, safety, or discomfort).