

EFFECTS OF A BRAIN INJURY

OUTCOME OF A BRAIN INJURY

Brain injuries affect people in different ways and may cause a host of physical, cognitive, emotional and social effects. The outcome can range from permanent disability to complete recovery.

COMMON CONSEQUENCES OF A BRAIN INJURY

PHYSICAL:

- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Chronic pain
- Sensory loss
- Coordination and balance problems
- Reduced mobility
- Epilepsy
- Sexual problems
- Appetite regulation
- Weakness
- Seizures

COGNITIVE:

- Memory problems
- Poor concentration and attention
- Lack of insight
- Planning and organising
- Slowed responses
- Inflexibility
- Language difficulties

EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL:

- Lower tolerance
- Rapid mood swings
- Apathy
- Inappropriate behaviour
- Impulsivity
- Anxiety and depressed mood
- Relationship strain
- Loss of independence



Not all consequences of a brain injury can be seen. You can't always see what's below the surface.

EFFECTS ON OTHERS

Acquired brain injury also has a wider effect on your family, friends and community in general, but it can be improved with appropriate rehabilitation and support.

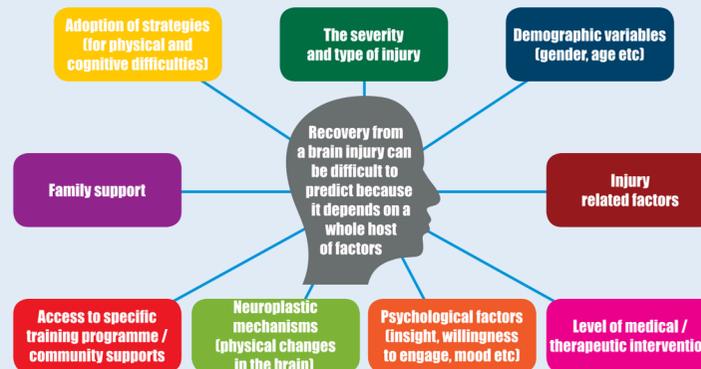
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RECOVERY AFTER A BRAIN INJURY

FACTORS INFLUENCING RECOVERY

Because of a number of different factors, it is difficult for medical professionals to give a definitive answer or time frame for recovery after a brain injury.



THE NEED FOR TIME

A lot of people look back on their recovery and speak about the need for time after a brain injury:

- Time to learn to cope with the effects of their injury
- Time to grieve the loss of aspects of life as lived before and to accept what is the present reality
- Time to face new challenges and regain confidence

The process of recovery involves more than just the physical aspect. There are also the cognitive and emotional aspects to be considered and sometimes these aspects can take more time.

IDEAS TO AID RECOVERY:

- Find out about how the brain works and how you have been affected
- Find out about supports available in your area (Quest Brain Injury Services etc)
- Work on physical fitness to aid fatigue
- Don't ignore emotional and behavioural aspects of injury
- Develop appropriate strategies to get around difficulties
- Understand that the rates of recovery differ for everyone

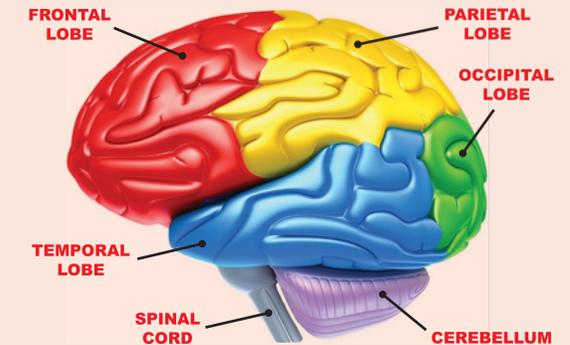
Produced by the clients of
Quest Brain Injury Services



BRAIN INJURY

SO WHAT IS A BRAIN INJURY?

Sometimes you hear the terms TBI or ABI being used about a brain injury, but what do they mean?



TBI - TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Traumatic brain injury is a change in brain function, caused by an external physical force. As a result of a TBI, the brain may be torn, stretched, penetrated, bruised, or become swollen and may affect one or more areas of the brain.

COMMON CAUSES OF TBI:

- Road traffic accidents
- Falls
- Assault
- Sports injuries
- Workplace injuries

HIDDEN DISABILITY

Acquired brain injury is often referred to as the hidden disability, because its long term problems are often in the areas of thinking and behaviour and are not as easy to see and recognise as many physical disabilities.

STATISTICS

There are no official figures for this country, but it is estimated that between 10,000 and 13,000 people acquire a brain injury in Ireland every year. It is further estimated that 128,000 people are living with the effects of ABI in Ireland today.

ABI - ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY

Acquired brain injury refers to any sudden damage to the brain not present at birth. A TBI is also an ABI because it is acquired.

COMMON CAUSES OF ABI:

- TBI
- Strokes
- Tumours
- Seizures
- Toxic exposures (fumes, chemicals etc)
- Infections (meningitis, encephalitis etc)

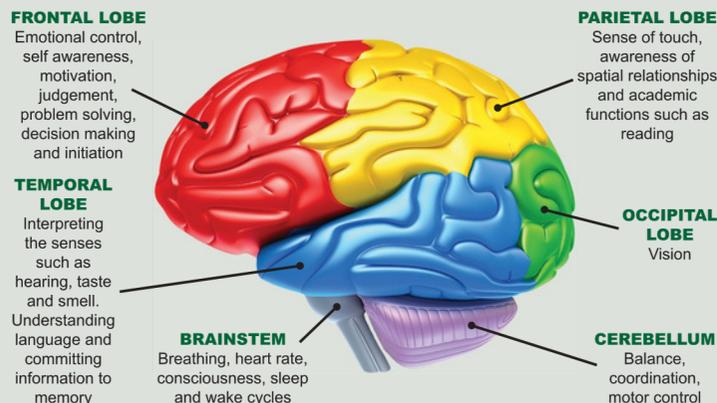
Quest Brain Injury Services is a
HSE funded community rehabilitation
programme for people who have had an ABI



PARTS & FUNCTIONS OF THE BRAIN

THE MAIN SECTIONS OF THE BRAIN

The human brain is the organ that carries out every function and action of the body. The main sections of the brain are shown here. While their functions are complex, the following can be used as a basic guide:



NEURONS

The brain is made up of millions of brain cells called neurons. Messages are passed around the brain via two pathways:

- Electrical
- Chemical (neurotransmitters)

Neurons work together in groups to perform specific tasks. When neurons are damaged, there can be difficulties carrying out these tasks (speaking, moving, processing information etc)

CEREBRAL HEMISPHERES

For most people the following applies:

LEFT HEMISPHERE

Controls the right of the body and includes:

- Language
- Verbal memory
- Logical / analytical skills

RIGHT HEMISPHERE

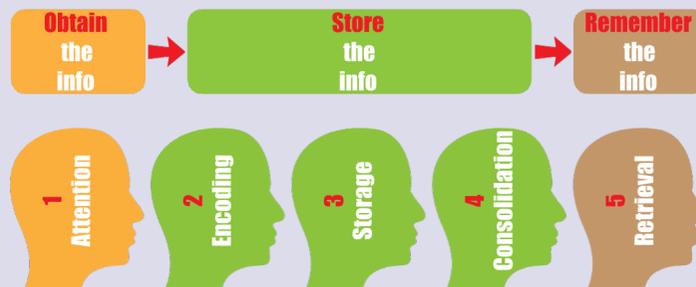
Controls the left of the body and includes:

- Visuospatial
- Visual memory
- Perceptual skills

MEMORY AFTER A BRAIN INJURY

STAGES OF MEMORY

Memory is a complex process that involves many areas of the brain and can be divided into 5 stages:

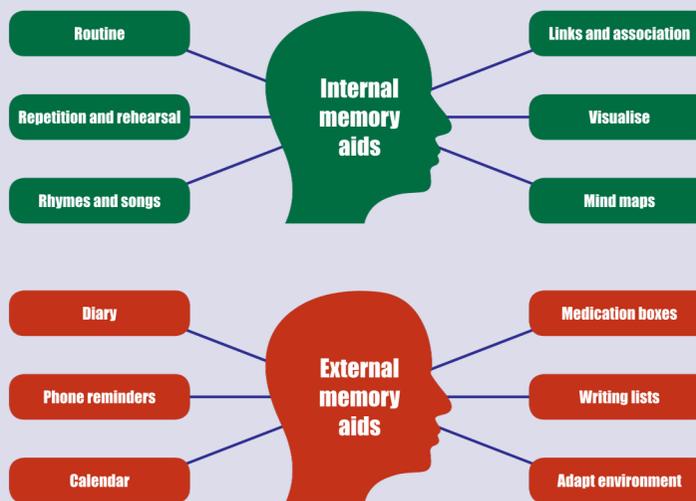


COMMON MEMORY PROBLEMS:

- Forgetting appointments
- Misplacing things
- Forgetting names
- Losing track of conversations
- Difficulty learning new skills
- Getting details mixed up

MEMORY AIDS AND STRATEGIES

We all use different strategies to help us remember things. After a brain injury you may need to start using more strategies, or tighten up the ones you already use:



FATIGUE AFTER A BRAIN INJURY

WHAT IS FATIGUE?

Fatigue is a feeling of exhaustion, tiredness, weariness, or lack of energy. After a brain injury, you may experience physical, psychological, or mental fatigue.



FATIGUE AND BRAIN INJURY

Fatigue is one of the most common problems following a brain injury and can affect as many as 70% of individuals. It can have a negative effect on your mood, memory, communication and tolerance levels. For some people however, fatigue persists long after the other symptoms have disappeared.

WHAT CAUSES FATIGUE?

The causes of fatigue after a brain injury are unclear, but the following theories are possible:

- Damage to the hypothalamus, which can affect sleep patterns
- Information processing is slower, so that the brain has to work harder, to achieve the same result
- Actions that used to be automatic and easy, now require thought and effort

COPING WITH FATIGUE

For some people fatigue improves over time. For others however, it's a condition that will need to be managed long term. Once you recognise the early warning signs, it is important to actively manage your fatigue, as it can affect so many areas of your life.



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