



What is an ABI?

The term Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) is used to describe all types of brain injury that occur after birth. Brain Injury is defined as a loss of brain function which can be caused by accidents, poisoning, stroke, alcohol/drug abuse, brain tumour, near drowning or disease.

Effects can be temporary or permanent and range from mild injury, such as being momentarily stunned while playing football, to a very severe injury (such as a car accident). Brain injury is often called the hidden disability because the person may outwardly appear to be unaffected.

Types of Brain Injury

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) a brain injury caused by the head being forced rapidly forward or backward. As a result, brain tissue may be torn, stretched, bruised or become swollen, and oxygen may not be able to get to the brain cells.

Closed Head Injury the most common cause of ABI. Occurs when the head is struck or moved violently but the skull and or membrane lining of the brain isn't broken. Such damage often involves 'diffuse brain injury' via widespread twisting of nerve fibres and bleeding.

Open Head Injury occurs when the skull and membrane lining of the brain have been penetrated so that the brain is exposed. Considerable local damage can occur in the area of the brain immediately below the impact area, as well as more widespread damage.

Mild Brain Injury sometimes when the head is moved violently there will be no loss of consciousness and the person may appear not to need medical attention (e.g. concussion). The ABI may not be diagnosed but the person may be seen responding more slowly.

Hypoxic-Anoxic Brain Injury occurs when there is a significant lack of oxygen supplied to the brain, producing cognitive, physical and emotional impairments. It can have a wider ranging impact throughout the brain than traumatic brain injury (BIA Qld).

Alcohol Related Acquired Brain Injury (ARBI) injury to the brain sustained as a result of excessive alcohol consumption. It can cause changes in cognition, difficulties with balance and coordination and a range of medical and neurological disorders.

Rehabilitation and Recovery

Most people have good recovery following Brain Injury, although many will experience some long term effects.

Recovery usually occurs over three stages:

1. Acute Stage – period of intense medical treatment immediately after injury. The main concern at this time is survival and medical stabilisation.
2. Rehabilitation or secondary stage – involves intensive therapy aimed at helping the natural process of recovery and reducing the likelihood of long term disability. This stage can take from 6-12 months.
3. Community re-entry or tertiary rehabilitation

This focuses on issues returning to activities such as work, study and leisure by adapting to any long-term problems and disabilities. Recovery is rapid at first with improvements occurring as swelling and bruising of the brain subside. Improvements slow as the damaged cells heal.

When a person sustains a brain injury it's impossible to predict how much they will recover and how long it will take, as this is different for each person. There is no way to predict which results are permanent and which are temporary, and the degree of the change may take time to become apparent.



What is an ABI?

What to do and tips

Many rehabilitation professionals have found there are common keys to making the most of the rehabilitation process.

- Attitude – those who make the most of their recoveries tend to have a positive outlook.
- Structure – creating a schedule reduces the need to continually make decisions, increases capabilities and reduces the demands on the carer.
- Memory prompts – develop lists, cue cards and other strategies to compensate for memory loss.
- This will help the person feel more independent and help them to make less mistakes.
- Familiar settings – learning is maximised in a familiar home environment, reducing the amount of new information to be taken in by a new setting.
- Feedback on behaviour – provide accurate and realistic feedback on the injured person's behaviour and its consequences so that they learn.
- Support groups – groups enable the person to identify with others with similar problems and feel a sense of belonging. Get involved – ask questions, attend family conferences and learn all you can during the rehabilitation process.
- Injury prevention – brain injury makes you more susceptible to further ones. Avoid toxic materials, alcohol and drugs, exposure to megavitamin therapy.

Please remember you are not alone.

Headwest's trained and compassionate advocates understand what clients, their Carers and family are facing. Let us help you to gain access to the best services for you following an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI).

Our service is free and confidential

Freecall: 1800 626 370

Email: admin@headwest.asn.au

Web: www.headwest.asn.au