Patient Information

University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust

Neuropsychology

Understanding cognitive and emotional changes after brain injury

After a brain injury, it's common for people to have changes in their thinking skills (cognition), emotions or behaviours.

These changes may not be noticeable in hospital. But you might find there are some changes when you return home.

Your attention and concentration

You may have problems with paying attention or maintaining concentration. This can mean you are easily distracted, have difficulty finishing tasks or switching between tasks and retaining information.

To improve your attention:

- take regular breaks
- reduce any distractions
- break tasks into smaller steps
- focus on one thing at a time

When completing important tasks, give yourself plenty of time and make sure you are well-rested.

Slowed processing

As your brain recovers, you may feel like it's working slower than usual and that you cannot process things as fast.

To help with slowed processing:

- ask people to repeat themselves if you miss what they say
- give yourself more time to complete tasks
- reduce any distractions where possible

Memory

You may find it difficult to remember things from the past and to create new memories. Fatigue and concentration problems are other effects of your brain injury that can cause memory problems.

For many people, their memory improves over time. But for some, it may never be as good as it was before.

When you're home, it might help to:

- use calendars, lists and diaries to write things down
- ask others for support
- have a daily structure and routine

Problem-solving and planning

Complex thinking skills are often affected after a brain injury. This means you may have difficulties planning your day, organising items, and completing tasks with many steps (such as cooking or shopping). You might not always notice when you make mistakes, and you may find it difficult to solve problems.

It might be helpful to:

- use checklists and a step-by-step approach to tasks
- keep a structured routine
- ask for advice from family or friends may help with planning
- think about tasks and situations ahead of time to consider any problems that may come up, and think of possible solutions for these problems

Fatigue

During your recovery, you may feel more tired than usual. Fatigue can make daily activities more challenging. It can also worsen the other difficulties you may have.

To support your body while you recover:

- try not to do too much in one day
- have a regular sleep routine
- stay hydrated and eat well

Mood and personality changes

You may have mood swings, low mood, and anxiety. You may have other personality changes, such as impulsivity and getting angry quickly. Your family and friends may notice these changes before you do.

Some of these mood and personality changes may be a direct result of the brain injury. Others may be because of changes in your life and abilities. You may struggle to do things you found easy before the injury.

Some of these mood and personality differences may change over time, and others may not. You can find more information and support at www.headway.org.uk.

Helpful resources

Our services

- You may be eligible to access our Neuropsychology Outpatient Clinic through your GP or UHCW consultant.

Headway – The Brain Injury Association

www.headway.org.uk

0808 800 2244

Brain Tumour Charity

www.thebraintumourcharity.org

Carers Trust

www.carers.org

Brain and Spine Foundation

www.brainandspine.org

NHS Talking Therapies

Visit https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-nhs-talking-therapies-service or speak with your GP.

Contact us

University Hospital Coventry, Clifford Bridge Road, Coventry, CV2 2DX

024 7696 5217

Lines open 7:30am-3:30pm

You can leave a voicemail outside these hours.

Your recommendations

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the Neuropsychology Team on 024 7696 5217 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke-free policy.

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