

Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI): Discharging Home

Mild traumatic brain injury is a disruption of your normal brain function caused by a traumatic event like a knock or blow to your head. You may have had a loss of consciousness (black out), or have no memory of events before or after your accident.

After a mild traumatic brain injury, you may experience physical, behavioural or cognitive (thinking and memory) changes. For most people these changes disappear within 3 months of injury. Often people only notice these changes when they go back to work, study or socialising. Family and friends can be the first to notice these changes.

What physical changes might my family and I see?

You may experience mild headaches, dizziness, nausea or vomiting, changes in your vision or ringing in your ears. You may also feel tired even though you are sleeping more than usual.

What strategies may help?

- To prevent feeling dizzy, get up slowly, so your body can adjust to the change
- It is important to get enough sleep while your brain is recovering
- Spread activities out over the day, so you have time to rest in between them

Where can I find useful information?

- Getting a good night sleep after a brain injury - Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service (ABIOS)
- Coping with fatigue - ABIOS

What behaviour changes might my family and I see?

You may have a 'shorter fuse', be impatient or become frustrated quickly. You may also become tearful and feel depressed or anxious

What strategies may help?

- Try to distract yourself if getting upset. Think of something else or change activity
- Avoid triggers, such as people who "wind you up"
- Try to remain calm. Ask yourself "is it worth getting upset over?"
- Think about your behaviour and what is okay or not okay in different places

Where can I find useful information?

- Brain function and changes in behaviour – ABIOS

- Depression and brain injury – ABIOS
- Anger – (Synapse)
- Emotional stages in recovery – Synapse
- Parents guide – challenging behaviour – Synapse

What cognitive changes might my family and I see?

You may have difficulty paying attention and remembering day-to-day events. You may also feel foggy or be slow when thinking and have difficulty making decisions.

What strategies may help?

- Limit distractions by going into a quiet room, so you can concentrate on your work
- Give yourself extra time to do activities (e.g. paying bills or completing paper work), so you don't feel rushed or make mistakes
- Take regular rest breaks
- Use a memory aid to help (e.g. calendar, post-it-notes, mobile phone or set an alarm)

Where can I find useful information?

- Attention and concentration after a brain injury – ABIOS
- Coping with changes in memory and learning – ABIOS
- Cognitive and behavioural changes and strategies – ABIOS
- Returning to study – ABIOS
- Attention and concentration – Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH)
- Coping with memory problems – RBWH

What do I need to know before leaving hospital?

Driving

Medical clearance is required to drive in Queensland after a brain injury. Your doctor will assess your fitness to drive based on the *Assessing Fitness to Drive* publication (AustRoads Guidelines). These standards are used by all Australian driver licensing authorities.

Ask your doctor when you can drive again: _____

Ask your occupational therapist for a *Medical conditions reporting: Jet's Law* brochure.

Alcohol

It is recommended you stop drinking alcohol until you have discussed it with your doctor. Alcohol has an effect on brain function, and drinking alcohol may slow down your recovery.

Work or study

You may need to take time off work or study. How much time you need off will depend on your injuries and the type of work you do.

Your doctor may recommend a gradual return to work or study. They can complete a medical certificate to let your employer or teacher know when it is safe for you to return.

Ask your doctor when it is safe for you to go back to work/ study: _____

Sport or heavy activity

If your brain has not fully recovered, it is dangerous to be injured again. Contact sports, sports where you may fall (e.g. cycling, skateboarding, horse riding) and heavy activity should be avoided until your symptoms have resolved.

While recovering from a brain injury there is a higher risk of having a seizure. Because of this, you should not swim alone.

Ask your doctor for advice about the activity you do or the sport you play.

Who can I talk to if I need help?

General Practitioner (GP)

Contact your GP if you have any concerns once you go home. They can provide you with extra information and advice. If you have ongoing problems following your brain injury, your GP can refer you to the Princess Alexandra Brain Injury Rehabilitation Unit (BIRU) Day Hospital.

Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service (ABIOS)

ABIOS is a community rehabilitation service. The service offers programs to assist people with brain injuries and their families understand their injury, how to care for themselves, build supports and engage in the community. Programs are also offered to children with parents who have a brain injury.

The ABIOS website provides links to brain injury resources.

Ph: 07 3406 2311 Web: www.health.qld.gov.au/abios/

Synapse

Synapse provides support services including community events, education and training. Synapse also has community response officers who can answer concerns and discuss assistance that may be appropriate. The Synapse website provides fact sheets on brain injuries and how to manage ongoing difficulties.

Ph: 07 3137 7400 Web: www.synapse.org.au

Job Access

The Job in Jeopardy assistance program is a free service available to a worker who is at risk of losing their job due to injury, illness or disability. Eligible workers must be aged between 14-65 and have worked at least 8hrs / week on average for the past 13 weeks. It is a personalised service, delivered by experienced employment consultants, which will look at what can be done to keep you in your current job. You can refer yourself for this service by phone or email.

In Brisbane North the Job in Jeopardy Program is available through Ipar Employment:

Ph: (07) 3253 5000 Email: jjj@ipar.com.au Web: www.ipar.com.au

To find the program in other areas of Queensland please call **Job Access** on 1800 464 800

Open Minds

Open Minds is a service that works with people who have a brain injury, mental illness, or disability. They assist people to live as independently as possible. Open Minds helps people to engage in the community, achieve personal goals and gain employment. Open Minds has a specialist unit working with people with an Acquired Brain Injury.

Ph: 07 3896 4222 Web: www.openminds.org.au/

Please contact your therapist if you have any queries or concerns.