



About Brain Injury

Brain injury includes a number of conditions and disorders that result in impairment to the brain and its functions. When we use the term 'brain injury' it is intended to cover both acquired brain injuries and degenerative brain disorders.

In this Article

- About Brain Injury
- Causes of brain injury
- Effects of brain injury

About Brain Injury

The long-term effects of a brain injury or disorder are different for each person, and will vary depending on the type of condition, the nature and location of the injury, and various other factors. The impacts of brain injury are also experienced by family and friends, particularly when the injury has resulted in personality or behaviour change.

Brain injuries are often called the 'hidden disability' because, although people can experience significant changes in how they think, feel and relate to others, there may be no outward physical signs of injury. As a result, the problems caused by brain injury can be easily ignored or misunderstood by others.

Did you know?

In Australia around 1 in 45 Australians acquire a brain disorder (AIHW, 2007). The Queensland Government acknowledges that one in 12 are affected in some way by brain injury.

Causes of brain injury

Acquired brain injury (ABI) generally refers to injuries sustained after birth. These include incidents that result in an interruption of blood or oxygen supply to the brain or traumatic external force to the head. Injuries sustained by infants in the womb such as Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) are also considered an ABI.

Brain injury also occurs through degenerative brain disorders such as Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease. Brain tumours, infections or brain diseases like Meningitis and Encephalitis can also result in brain injury. Degenerative disorders can have similar impacts to ABI, but their different characteristics may need specialist support.

Effects of brain injury

The long-term effects of a brain injury or disorder are different for each person, and will vary depending on the type of condition, the nature and location of the injury, and other factors. For example, while degenerative disorders typically impact the body's ability to control movement, other brain injuries may have an impact on cognition, personality and behaviour.

Cognitive effects

- Memory problems
- Difficulty problem-solving
- Poor concentration and attention
- Reduced ability to organise and plan
- Lack of initiative and motivation
- Lack of insight and awareness, and poor judgement

Physical effects

- Movement disorders and paralysis
- Dizziness and balance problems
- Epilepsy and seizures
- Eyesight, hearing and speech problems
- Loss of taste and smell
- Headaches
- Chronic pain
- Fatigue and sleep disorders
- Hormonal changes

Behavioural effects

- Irritability and anger
- Slowed responses
- Poor social skills
- Impulsive behaviour and/or a lack of emotional control
- Disinhibition

Mental effects

- Stress
- Depression
- Panic attacks
- Anxiety
- Personality disorders

Secondary effects

The interaction of impacts can result in additional secondary changes such as:

- Changes to living arrangements
- Reduced or changed social networks
- Different vocational capabilities
- Altered relationships and family dynamics