

Brain Injury Signs and Symptoms

What are the signs of a brain injury?

Brain injury can cause changes in:

- Thinking and memory
- Emotions
- Ability to communicate
- Body functions

Some examples include memory problems, difficulty concentrating, forgetting words, mood swings, depression, bad headaches that don't go away, and difficulty sleeping or sleeping all the time.

What are the behavioral changes that someone experiences after brain injury?

Common emotional and behavioral changes after brain injury include:

- Depression or sadness
 - Increased irritability or anxiety
 - Difficulty with memory or recalling information
 - Fatigue, tiredness, or drowsiness
 - Over-reacting
 - Blaming other people
 - Being afraid of other people
 - Avoiding people
 - Poor judgment
 - Taking risks without thinking first
 - Having problems with relationships
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Why is it important to write down your symptoms after a brain injury?

You might consider keeping a journal of what you are experiencing after a brain injury. This will help you to communicate with your doctor so that your needs are addressed. This journal may also be a useful place to log conversations, questions, and information received.

Preparing to Leave the Hospital

What is a discharge plan?

When your loved one is ready to leave the hospital, he or she may go to a rehabilitation program, a skilled nursing facility, or home (perhaps with home health care).

The discharge plan includes medical instructions to the patient and family for the plan of recovery after leaving the hospital. If this plan does not include rehabilitation, talk to hospital therapist or social worker about setting up an at-home rehabilitation plan.

Frequently Asked Questions About Pediatric Brain Injury

What is the family's role in discharge planning?

Stay in communication with the social worker throughout your loved one's stay in the hospital. That way you are up-to-date on management of your loved one's treatment plan.

The social worker will coordinate with your doctors and nurses and with your insurance company to plan your family member's discharge from the hospital. You will need to help plan for the care your loved one will need. You may need to visit rehabilitation or nursing facilities to decide which one is best for your loved one. Ask the social worker for answers to your questions about these facilities.

You will also need to be involved in the discussions with your insurance company about how to pay for services and equipment that may be needed.

This can be a stressful time for family members. People often find they cannot remember as much information in these circumstances as they usually would be able to do. Ask your social worker for information and take notes to help you understand and remember what you learn.

Levels of Care

There are various terms used to describe the level of care a facility provides:

- Acute – active but short term treatment with goal of stabilizing the patient
- Skilled (Sub-Acute) - provides extensive nursing care and daily therapy.
- Residential (Facility) Care – patient is fairly independent and doesn't need routine nursing care or therapies.

Where can I find additional information?

Contact the Brain Injury Alliance of Iowa for more information, including our Brain Injury Informational Tote Bag, and for help finding and connecting to services and resources. Our Neuro-Resource Facilitators can assist with navigating the insurance system, provide information on applying for Social Security and Medicaid benefits, guide you through exception to policy procedures, make 3-party calls with you to provide assistance and advocacy, as well as provide information and support on a range of other topics.

Call 855-444-6443 or email info@biaia.org

Children and Brain Injury

What impact might a TBI have on my child's ability to learn?

Brain injury can cause problems with learning new information. Younger children have little previous knowledge to build new learning upon.

As a child grows, the brain develops more complex functions. A brain injury that occurs at an early stage of development may cause later problems as the child matures.

Children may have effects of brain injury as they get older, even months or years after the injury. It is important to keep this in mind if you begin to notice mental or emotional problems in your child.

If your child has become frustrated, angry, or depressed, talk to the professionals at school about how your child's brain injury may be tied to this behavior.

What is the importance of my child's neuropsychological evaluation?

A neuropsychological evaluation will contain recommendations for supports and services to help your child at school. This information can be used to develop the school's plan for your child.

Specialists You May Need

Do I need a special kind of doctor?

Some Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Doctors (also called a Physiatrist or PM&R Doctor) specialize in brain injury. A physiatrist with experience in brain injury will guide your treatment plan and make sure you are referred to the resources you need.

Other specialists may be needed for specific issues, such as:

- Neuro-ophthalmologist (for vision problems after brain injury)
 - Auditory processing specialist such as audiologist or Neuro-otologist (for hearing/understanding problems)
 - Neuro-psychologist (for cognitive assessments, study brain-behavior connection)
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How important is counseling after a brain injury?

Many people have emotional changes after brain injury. These changes may be more noticeable to your family and friends than to you, especially at first.



Frequently Asked Questions About Pediatric Brain Injury

Counseling helps brain injury survivors and family members adjust to the changes that may occur after injury and can make rehabilitation easier for you and your family.

Community Resources:

Brain Injury Alliance of Iowa
7025 Hickman Rd Suite 7
Urbandale, IA 50322
P: 855-444-6443
E: info@biaia.org
F: 800-381-0812

Child Health Speciality Clinics work to improve the health, development, and well-being of children and youth with special health care needs from birth through 21 years of age with complicated medical and/or behavioral issues.

<http://www.uichildrens.org/communityclinics/>
P: 888-573-5437

Center for Disabilities and Development, part of the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, provides comprehensive health care and services to people with disabilities and to their families through a combination of outpatient, inpatient, and community-based programs.

www.uihealthcare.org/cdd
P: 877-686-0031

Early Access is Iowa's System of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with or at risk for development delays.

www.earlyaccessiowa.org
P: 888-425-4371

Your child's school is an important resource for your child after brain injury. Check with your local Area Education Agency (AEA) to learn if a Brain Injury Resource Team is available to assist educators. You can also request to be linked to a Parent-Educator Connection (PEC) parent coordinator.

Ask Family Resource Center provides information and advocacy on legal rights and resources for students with disabilities. They also specialize in providing information concerning advocacy for Special Education and Section 504 Disability Accommodations.

www.askresource.org
P: 800-450-8667
E: info@askresource.org