

# ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY

## WHAT IS ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY?

Acquired brain injury (ABI) is an injury that results in changes of how the cells in your brain are working. This can impact parts or structures of your brain, how your brain uses energy, chemicals and hormones in your brain and how your brain fires and operates. An ABI is not something you are born with it. It can be traumatic or the result of an external force on the brain.

### Examples of a traumatic ABI include:

- Falls
- Motor vehicle accidents
- Being hit by an object

### Examples of a non-traumatic ABI include:

- Stroke
- Aneurysm
- Tumor
- Infectious disease
- Lack of oxygen supply to the brain, some examples include:
  - Near drowning
  - Heart attack
  - Asphyxiation

An ABI can be **focal**, primarily affect one part of your brain, or **diffuse**, affect multiple parts of your brain.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ABI?

How an acquired brain injury (ABI) affects you completely depends on the type of injury, how severe the injury is, where in the brain the injury is and your unique brain. No two injuries are alike and there is a lot of overlap with signs and symptoms.

### In general, signs and symptoms of an ABI can include:

- An injury to the front part of your brain affects your ability to plan, organize and think things through. An injury to this part of your brain can affect your judgement and impulsivity.

- An injury to the back of your brain can affect your vision.
- For the majority of people, an injury to the left side of your brain affects language and an injury to the right side of your brain affects your awareness, ability to put things together and your attention.
- Diffuse injuries tend to impact lots of areas including memory and thinking speed.

## **RECOVERY AFTER AN ABI**

Recovery from an acquired brain injury (ABI) depends on a lot of factors including the injury and your health. A few tips that can help improve brain health and recovery after an ABI include:

- Good diet, regular sleep and avoiding non-prescribed substances including alcohol and drugs.
- Staying active is one of the best things for brain health and recovery. Working with therapies (including physical and occupational therapy), walking and exercise are all ways to stay active.
- Working with a speech language pathologist, physical and occupational therapy, vocational rehabilitation, and psychology if your doctor recommends it.
- Set and follow a schedule. This predictability will help you stay organized, help ensure that you regularly do the things that are good for you (meals, medications, activity) and allow you to pace yourself.

