

Effects of ABI on stages of development

A suggestion for implementing the strategy

'Understand impacts on learning and wellbeing' from the Guide: [Acquired brain injury and learning](#)

Includes:

Age at time of injury can influence impact

Injuries at 0–3 years

Injuries at 3–6 years

Injuries at 6–12 years

Injuries at 12–16 years

Injuries at 16–19 years

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Supporting learners with acquired brain injury](#)

Strategy: [Understand impacts on learning and wellbeing](#)

Suggestion: [Effects of ABI on stages of development](#)

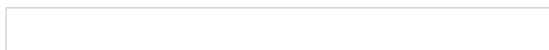
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Age at time of injury can influence impact



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Provide more effective support by knowing what to look for and what to expect.

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Injuries at 0–3 years

Overview of indicators.

Between years 0–3 children are usually:

- acquiring language
- refining sensory and motor systems
- regulating sleep–wake patterns
- beginning to understand cause and effect
- establishing connections with caregivers.

Possible disruptions following brain injury include:

- difficulty explaining or communicating needs
- not connecting cause and effect
- high reliance on support and structure
- disturbed sleep
- easily overwhelmed
- behaviour hard to predict
- see–sawing emotions from content to angry
- low responsiveness to others.

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Injuries at 3–6 years

Overview of indicators.

Between years 3–6 children are usually:

- growing understanding of cause and effect
- developing an ability to think before acting
- focusing on one aspect of a situation at a time
- emotionally focussed on control and mastery
- concrete and rigid thinkers.

Possible disruptions following brain injury include:

- see-sawing emotions from content to angry
- difficulty making decisions, judging situations, initiating play
- immediate expression of feelings
- high anxiety when separating from caregivers
- difficulty grasping concepts such as: same/different; quantity (some/all); size (big/little); shapes; time concepts (yesterday/next week) and cause and effect
- dependence on structure and organisation provided by adults.

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Injuries at 6–12 years

Overview of indicators.

Between years 6–12 children usually:

- develop a robust understanding of cause and effect
- are ready to learn academic skills
- recognise that effort is important
- recognise intention of acts as important.

Possible disruptions following brain injury can include:

- disruption in reading, spelling, maths skills
- lack of success despite hard work
- avoidance
- random behaviour during unstructured times
- depression, social isolation, or withdrawal from peers
- sleep disturbance
- tiredness.

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Injuries at 12–16 years

Overview of indicators.

Between years 12–16 young people usually:

- consider three or more dimensions simultaneously
- use abstract reasoning
- show anxiety related to social and emotional development
- have increasing autonomy
- begin identity development
- take responsibility: able to care for self, babysit, perform jobs for pay.

Possible disruptions following brain injury may include:

- unevenness in learning profile
- difficulty learning new concepts
- slower rate of mental processing
- difficulty organising complex tasks over time
- judgment and reasoning difficulties
- increased “frustration” response
- depression
- fatigue.

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Injuries at 16–19 years

Overview of indicators.

Developmental characteristics of 16–19-year-olds:

- complex reasoning and judgement
- ability to plan and execute complex projects over time
- solid sense of own identity
- social sophistication
- capacity for compassion.

Possible disruptions following brain injury:

- new and unexpected gaps in learning (for example, memory for numbers)
- reduced speed of mental processing
- inability to organise complex tasks
- conflict between specific challenges and career goals
- interference in developmental drive toward independence/separation
- social awkwardness
- tiredness
- defensiveness regarding emotional/cognitive problems
- depression
- negative body and/or social image.

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