

FACT SHEET



Cognitive Changes After Brain Injury Initiation & Motivation

QUICK FACTS

- The ability to initiate activities and see them through to completion is an important skill for everyday life
- Initiation & motivation are considered executive functions regulated by the frontal lobes
- **Adynamia** is the term used to describe the lack of motivation. It is very common after brain injury and is not the same as laziness
- Initiation is an important part of motivation; you need to get started in order to complete a task

WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE?

- Difficulty getting started with a task or activity
- May have difficulty following through once an activity is started
- Does not always mean the person feels unmotivated; he/she may talk about their plans and know what they want to do, yet they don't know how to start the activity

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE CAUSES AND COMPLICATIONS?

Possible Causes:

- Often due to injury of frontal lobe
- Adynamia can be confused with other aspects of ABI such as fatigue and depression

Possible Complications:

- Difficulties with motivation can make an impact on aspects of recovery such as rehabilitation, learning coping skills, social functioning and a return to work/study
- Social isolation because individuals may not have the motivation to go out or call a friend

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Structure and routine will help with individuals complete activities
- Use prompts to start and continue activities (e.g. alarm clocks, mobile phones, and visual reminders)
- Find activities that are interesting and will increase motivation and interest
- Engaging in the activity with the person may help them get started and keep them involved
- Break tasks down; smaller steps and checklists can make the task seem less overwhelming
- Structure and remove clutter from the environment
- Schedule events with built-in rest periods, create task lists, and keep the environment free of distractions
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle that includes sleep, regular exercise, avoiding/limiting alcohol, maintaining a healthy diet, and maintaining social contact

Disclaimer: This information is not meant to replace advice from a medical doctor. Consult the primary care physician regarding specific medical concerns or treatment.