

# FACT SHEET

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## Cognitive Changes After Brain Injury Self-Awareness and Insight

### QUICK FACTS

- Insight and self-awareness refer to a person's ability to reflect on their own thoughts and actions
- Lack of insight is one of the most difficult and frustrating changes for individuals to cope with following brain injury
- Can be upsetting for caregivers when the individual behaves inappropriately without being aware that there is anything wrong with their actions

### WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE?

- Individual may not be aware of any problems or challenges
- Individual may disagree with others about their difficulties and refuse to talk about them
- Individual may not be able to understand their own or other people's feelings and behaviours

### WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE CAUSES AND COMPLICATIONS?

#### Possible causes:

- An inability to assess and monitor one's performance and abilities
- Concentration and memory challenges as these reduce insight
- Inability to set goals and put strategies into action

#### Possible complications

- May not understand their difficulties or why rehabilitation is necessary
- May not understand how their cognitive difficulties are impacting family and friends, activities of daily living, driving, and general life in the community
- Inability to self-monitor due to limited self-awareness which can cause challenging behaviours
- May not understand legal matters, safety, and employment issues

### WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Provide non-judgmental feedback on the individual's actions but avoid these if they are angry, tired or frustrated
- Use clear and direct language
- Avoid arguments
- Direct attention to any improvements, strengths or changes instead of focusing on the difficulties
- Encourage the individual to analyze their own actions and performance and to provide feedback on their own performance
- Assist the individual in setting realistic and achievable goals
- Encourage rehabilitation by linking achievement of goals or rehabilitation to personal goals (i.e. returning to work, and driving)
- Minimize risks, such as driving, cooking, etc.
- Consider accessing counselling and support groups for the individual and yourself
- Educate yourself and others about the concern regarding lack of insight

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