

FACT SHEET



Emotional and Behavioural Changes After Brain Injury Depression and Sadness

QUICK FACTS

- Feeling down, sad, or worried for a short time after a distressing event is normal
- Depression however, includes: feelings of sadness, a depressed mood, or a loss of interest/pleasure that lasts for more than two weeks

WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE?

- Fatigue, changes in weight/appetite, sleep problems, feeling weak or physically tired
- Loss of interest in activities, social isolation or withdrawal
- Unkempt appearance
- Difficulty with concentration and motivation, performance may fall below their capabilities
- Difficulty making decisions
- Individual may have intense feelings of sadness, anger, guilt, and confusion
- May be unable to see positive qualities in oneself
- The injured person may express:
 - Thoughts of low self-esteem
 - Hopelessness and despair
 - Suicidal thoughts and feelings

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE CAUSES AND COMPLICATIONS?

Possible causes

- Damage to the brain's emotional control regions
- Individual gaining insight into how brain injury has changed them
- The individual may experience a sense of grief due to loss of:
 - Skills they used to have (e.g. cooking, playing sports, drawing, etc.)
 - Independence (e.g. dressing themselves, driving)
 - Lifestyle (e.g. friends no longer include the individual in activities)
 - Career (e.g. unable to go back to work or have the same job)
 - Companionship (e.g. may lose friends, intimate relationships)
- Individual may isolate themselves and eventually become disconnected from their friends and family who support them
- The completion of rehabilitation activities may be difficult and as a result lead to a slower recovery

Possible complications:

- Individual may isolate themselves and eventually become disconnected from their friends and family
- The completion of rehabilitation activities may be difficult and as a result lead to a slower recovery

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

FACT SHEET CONTINUED.



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WHAT CAN WE DO?

- If you believe the individual's daily life is being impacted by their depressive symptoms, contact their primary care physician for direction concerning medications and therapies that may help
- Try to understand how the individual is feeling, as this can provide insight when dealing with any challenging behaviour
- Listen and talk with the individual about how they are feeling, acknowledge that it is reasonable to feel depressed due to the trauma they have been through
- Watch for signs of alcohol or drug misuse

Encourage individual to:

- Exercise regularly
- Engage in an enjoyable activity or hobby
- Eat nutritiously
- Practice good sleep hygiene
- Follow a routine and stay involved in social activities
- Focus on what is in their control
- Request help when needed
- Accept support from others
- Seek counselling, support groups, or other therapies

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