

# Acquired Brain Injury in Children

*The Child Brain Injury Trust is a national charity supporting anyone affected by childhood acquired brain injury. The following information has been developed to help the reader understand more about brain injury and some of the associated issues. Every effort has been taken to ensure the information is accurate and up to date. If you require more immediate support or assistance please contact our Helpline 0303 3032248 or email [helpline@cbituk.org](mailto:helpline@cbituk.org) where we will be able to respond to your specific enquiry and or offer support.*

The following E-Learning sessions which families and some professionals can access free of charge may also be beneficial:

[Understanding Childhood Acquired Brain Injury](#)

[Basic Brain Anatomy and Functions](#)

[Understanding and Managing Behaviour](#)

[Understanding and Managing Perception](#)

[Understanding and Managing Memory](#)

[Understanding and Managing Social Skills](#)

[Understanding and Managing Fatigue](#)

[Understanding and Managing Attention and Concentration](#)

[Understanding and Managing Organisation and Planning](#)

## Acquired brain injury in children

The brain is the most complex organ in the human body. It controls our movements, thoughts, feelings, behaviour, memory, speech, sight, hearing and other senses.

If a child's brain gets injured as a result of an accident, illness (such as meningitis or encephalitis), poisoning, stroke, lack of oxygen or tumor, it is referred to as an acquired brain injury (ABI).<sup>1</sup> If the cause is a bump or knock to the head, it can also be referred to as a traumatic brain injury (TBI).<sup>2</sup> Brain injury is also sometimes referred to as a head injury.



- In adults the effects of brain injury generally show soon after the event, but for children it can be very different - sometimes it can take months or years for the injury to become obvious. There are two reasons why it may take longer for the effects to show in children:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.priorygroup.com/Conditions/Specialist-Services-Conditions/Acquired-brain-injury-ABI.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/traumaticbraininjury.html>

<sup>3</sup> Middleton, J.A. (2001) Practitioner Review: Psychological Sequelae of Head Injury in Children and Adolescents. *J.Child Psychol. Psychiat.* Vol.42, No. 2, pp. 165-180.

- For some skills it is only when the injured part of the brain develops fully that the extent of a brain injury can be known as parts of the brain continue to develop throughout childhood and adolescence into early adulthood. <sup>3</sup>
- As they enter adolescence most young people will be developing independence skills and their ability to plan and regulate their life. <sup>iii</sup> For young people with an acquired brain injury, difficulties in these areas can become obvious during this time.

Acquired brain injury affects every individual differently, but common effects include:

### Physical

- Tiredness and fatigue
- Doing things at a slower pace

### Thinking

- Taking longer to process information
- Difficulties concentrating, being easily distracted
- Forgetfulness, particularly in relation to new information and recent events
- Following and understanding verbal instructions
- Organising and planning
- Monitoring and regulating behaviour



### Emotions

- Sadness and depression
- Anxiety and stress
- Fear
- Obsessiveness

### Behaviours

- Acting on impulse, without thinking through the consequences
- Immaturity
- Aggression – physical and verbal
- Sexually inappropriate behaviour

Each individual with ABI may have a different combination of symptoms from the list above. These difficulties are likely to have a significant effect on daily life, education and social relationships. It is important that everyone who works with a child with an ABI understands these effects and recognises that the issues are linked, and can develop or lessen over time.

If you are concerned about anything highlighted in this ‘fact-sheet’ or would like more information about this subject, please contact our helpline/referral service on 0303 303 2248 or [helpline@cbituk.org](mailto:helpline@cbituk.org) or go to our website [www.childbraininjurytrust.org.uk](http://www.childbraininjurytrust.org.uk)

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.priorygroup.com/Conditions/Specialist-Services-Conditions/Acquired-brain-injury-ABI.aspx>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/traumaticbraininjury.html>

<sup>iii</sup> Middleton, J.A. (2001) Practitioner Review: Psychological Sequelae of Head Injury in Children and Adolescents. *J.Child Psychol. Psychiat.* Vol.42, No. 2,pp. 165-180.

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## MAKE A DONATION TODAY

The Child Brain Injury Trust relies on grants and donations to enable us to continue our work supporting families affected by childhood acquired brain injury.

Please help us to continue our work by making a donation today – [CLICK HERE](#) to make a one-off donation or set up a monthly donation.

*Thank you – your donation does make a difference.*

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