

Disinhibition and Impulsiveness After an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

- When you have an acquired brain injury (ABI), you may have less control over how you behave. This may cause you to be more:
 - › **Disinhibited:** Have less control over your emotions and reactions
 - › **Impulsive:** Act without planning or thinking about the outcome
- You may say or do things that other people think:
 - › Are not socially appropriate (rude, impulsive, or sexually inappropriate)
 - › Are not safe
- Disinhibition and impulsiveness can affect your activities and relationships.
- **It is important to know that you are not doing this on purpose.**
 - › You may not be aware that you are doing it.
 - › You may be aware, but feel like you cannot stop or change your behaviour, even if it troubles you.

What causes disinhibition and impulsiveness?

- The **frontal lobe** of your brain helps you control how you behave and act in different situations. It manages how intense (strong) your responses are and helps you to respond to people and situations in appropriate ways.
- An ABI can damage your frontal lobe, which can cause disinhibition and impulsiveness.
- Disinhibition and impulsiveness are often worse if you are:
 - › Tired
 - › Stressed
 - › Not familiar with a person, place, or task

Tips for managing disinhibition and impulsiveness

- **Stay calm:** It is important for your support person(s) to try and stay calm and in control of their emotions. If the people around you are calm, it can help you to stay calm.

- **Structure and routine:** A familiar environment and a routine that includes regular rest can help to support your behaviour.
- **Structured responses:** Work with your support person(s) to find ways to help you stay calm in the moment.
 - › For example, if you have trouble waiting, your support person(s) can remind you to take deep breaths.
- **Clear expectations:** Before going into a new situation, your support person(s) can check what is expected and give you clear directions to help guide your behaviour.
- **Take breaks:** You and/or your support person(s) may need to leave a situation for a short time until you are able to be calm again.

Resources

Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia

- › Phone: 902-422-5000
- › Phone (toll-free): 1-833-452-7246
- › www.braininjuryns.com

Brain Injury Canada

- › www.braininjurycanada.ca

211 Nova Scotia

- This free helpline can connect you to community and social services in your area. Service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in more than 240 languages.
 - › Phone: 211
 - › <https://ns.211.ca>

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

*Prepared by: Acquired Brain Injury Ambulatory Care Teams
Designed and Managed by: Library Services*