

## Memory After Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

Changes in memory are common after an acquired brain injury (ABI). Memory involves many functions, such as taking in, storing, and retrieving information.

- There are different types of memory. Some of these types include:
  - › **short-term memory:** information you remember for only a short time
  - › **long-term memory:** information you remember for a long time
  - › **prospective memory:** remembering to do something in the future

### How might changes in memory affect me?

You may find that you:

- › forget important details (e.g., names, appointments, information from a doctor's appointment)
- › forget to pay bills
- › forget to take a medication
- › forget where you put something
- › forget something you said or did
- › forget how to do things (e.g., using computer programs, fixing things, cooking)
- › have trouble following the story in a movie or book
- › have trouble following instructions or a conversation
- › have trouble learning something new

### What else could affect my memory?

- › distractions (e.g., noise, lights, crowds)
- › fatigue (tiredness)
- › not getting enough sleep
- › stress
- › illness
- › being in pain
- › depression and anxiety
- › side effects from medication(s)
- › drug and/or alcohol use
- › other health conditions

### Focus on your well-being.

Healthy habits support brain function, including memory.

- › get enough sleep
- › manage stress
- › eat healthy foods
- › get regular physical activity

# Tips for managing your memory

## 1. Use organization and routine.

- › Have a certain place for important items you use a lot (e.g., keys, wallet, glasses, cell phone) and always put them back in their place.
- › Put up a whiteboard, corkboard, or calendar where you will see it, to remind you of appointments, things you need to do, or bills to pay.
- › Use storage systems with labels for important items (e.g., a filing system for bills, tax information, legal documents).
- › Follow a routine. When activities are routine, you are more likely to remember them (e.g., take your medication at the same time that you have your morning coffee each day).

## 2. Use external memory aids (things in your environment that can help you to remember information). Most people use external memory aids even if they don't have a memory problem. External memory aids include:

- › calendars (paper or electronic)
- › wall charts
- › day planners
- › sticky notes
- › “to-do” lists
- › technology (e.g., smartphones and apps, Bluetooth® trackers, smart watches)
- › notebooks and journals
- › timers
- › medication boxes or blister packs

## 3. Use internal memory aids (mental tips or tricks that can help you to remember information). Internal memory aids can help you to remember small amounts of information when you are not able to record it. Relating information to things that you already know will increase your chances of recalling it later.

- › use as many senses as you can to take in information (e.g., read information out loud so you see it and hear it)
- › make a picture in your mind of the information you are trying to remember
- › break larger amounts of information down into smaller groups (e.g., phone numbers are grouped to help with recall: 555-555-5555)
- › repeat and practice information in your head or out loud
- › make links between new information that you are trying to remember and information you already know (e.g., associate the name of a person you just met with the name of someone you already know, such as a friend or famous person)
- › make up a funny or silly story or rhyme about information you want to remember

## Resources

**The Brain Injury Workbook: Exercises for Cognitive Rehabilitation** - Trevor Powell

**Memory and Learning after Brain Injury** - Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service

- › [www.health.qld.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0036/671949/memory\\_abi\\_cl.pdf](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0036/671949/memory_abi_cl.pdf)

**Using Memory Strategies After Brain Injury** - Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service

- › [www.health.qld.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0036/671877/memory\\_strategies\\_fsw.pdf](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0036/671877/memory_strategies_fsw.pdf)