

Alcohol and Drug Use After an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

An acquired brain injury (ABI) causes you to lose brain cells. This means that your remaining brain cells have to work harder to do the same kinds of activities as before your injury.

Using alcohol and drugs affects how your brain works. If you have an ABI, using alcohol and drugs can have a serious effect on you and your recovery from ABI.

After an ABI:

1. Using alcohol or drugs will make your recovery harder.

- › If you use alcohol or drugs after an ABI, you won't recover as well or as fast as people who avoid alcohol and drugs. Using alcohol or drugs could make you lose any progress you have already made. Skills that you might have been able to get back could also be lost. Alcohol and other drugs may also interfere with how well prescribed medications work.

2. Using alcohol or drugs makes it more likely you may have a seizure.

- › Some people with an ABI have a higher risk of seizures. Using alcohol or drugs increases your chance of having a seizure, even if you are at the lowest level of risk after your brain injury. Alcohol and drugs also keep seizure medication from working as well.

3. Using alcohol or drugs can hurt your brain even more.

- › Alcohol damages your brain and can cause loss of brain cells. This damage would add to the effects from your ABI.

4. People who use alcohol or drugs are more likely to have another brain injury.

- › A person who has trouble thinking clearly, walking smoothly, or reacting quickly due to an ABI is 3 times more likely to have another brain injury. Each injury after an ABI will cause more harm than the first one. The loss of more brain cells from a second injury will leave even fewer cells to do the same jobs.

5. Alcohol and drugs will affect you more quickly and have a greater effect on you.

- › You will get intoxicated (drunk) faster after an ABI, and the effects of alcohol and drugs will be much greater. Using alcohol or drugs will make it harder for you to function well.

For example, you may:

- › Be less able to control what you say or do. This can lead to risk taking, arguments, or other socially inappropriate behaviour.
- › Have problems with concentration, memory, problem solving, and learning.
- › Have more trouble with balance, walking, and talking.
- › Feel depressed.

Remember: When you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, you will not be able to effectively use any coping strategies you may have learned.

Recovering from an ABI takes time. Avoiding alcohol and drugs gives you the best possible chance for recovery.

For more info, please talk with your family health care provider, social worker, or other health care provider.

Resources

Nova Scotia Health Authority Community Based Addiction Services - Central Intake

- › Phone (toll free): 1-866-340-6700
- › www.nshealth.ca/content/community-based-addiction-services

Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

Nova Scotia Health Authority promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.

Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!

www.nshealth.ca

Prepared by: Acquired Brain Injury Ambulatory Care Teams

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