

Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) and Disability Support Services



Supported independent living for ABI

This document provides information on acquired brain injury, known as ABI, and the option of supported independent living for people with ABI.

If you would like to speak to someone directly, contact us, or call 1800 673 074 to speak to Synapse – an organisation specialising in home care services for people living with brain injuries.

What is an acquired brain injury?

The term acquired brain injury (ABI) is used to refer to a range of disabilities that result from damage to the brain after birth. ABI can also be called brain injury or brain damage. ABI can cause problems with mental, emotional, or physical abilities that get worse. For some people, the effects remain the same over time.

ABI is not a mental illness, disease, or birth defect. It is also different from a head injury, which is used to describe someone's head or face being injured without impacting the brain.

Causes of ABI

Causes of ABI can be sudden (a specific incident or injury), or insidious (caused over a longer period of time). Some common causes of ABI include:

- disease, such as cancer, multiple sclerosis (MS), Parkinson's and Alzheimers;
- infections that cause inflammation in the brain, e.g., meningitis;
- stroke;

- traumatic or high-impact injuries to the head and neck;
- poisoning, including through drug and alcohol use by overdose or prolonged abuse; and
- lack of oxygen to the brain, such as from drowning or choking.

Symptoms of ABI

ABI impacts everyone differently, and symptoms depend on which part of the brain has been affected. These can be physical, cognitive (relating to mental processing), emotional, and behavioural, and range from mild to severe.

Some effects include:

- increased mental or physical fatigue;
- headaches, nausea, and changes in appetite or sleep patterns;
- change in vision, smell or touch;
- weakness or stiffness in the body, loss of coordination, or shaking;
- difficulty or slowness with calculations, planning and problem solving;
- memory, concentration or attention difficulties;
- increased confusion and difficulty holding a conversation;
- mood swings or increased irritability; and
- changes in personality.

It is important you speak to a doctor if you have concerns. Understanding the **different impacts of ABI** makes it easier to get the right support.

Diagnosis

In the case of an accident, injury or emergency situation, contact 000 immediately.

If you or someone you know have had concerns for a while, it is still important you contact a doctor — **find a general practitioner (GP) near you**. Synapse, Australia's Brain Injury Organisation, **provides information and referral services** if you think you might have sustained a brain injury.

Doctors may need to ask questions and perform tests to confirm if an ABI is the cause of your symptoms. This will also help identify where the damage is, and assess how the injury is impacting you.

ABI treatment and supports

There are a range of supports available for people living with ABI. Your rehabilitation and ongoing management plan should be specific to you, your injury, and the impact it has on your life now and into the future. There are a range of **disability support services** on offer to assist with **supported independent living**, as well as a range of **home care services** and **NDIS support coordination**.

If you have been hospitalised due to your injury, you may be given more information and useful contacts to ensure you receive appropriate services once you are discharged. You might also find it helpful to book regular appointments with a doctor.

You can apply for support from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS provides funding for the **supports and services** you might need because of your brain injury. Your doctor can help you **apply for access**, and your home care package may also include a range of options for added assistance.

ABI is often an adjustment for family, carers, friends and workplaces too. It helps to connect with organisations offering support and advocacy for people with ABI, and to get support managing treatment and disability services that may be new in your lives. Organisations like Synapse provide information for **living with brain injury**, as well as **information for families and carers**.

Carer supports are available through government-funded **carer support programs**, the **NDIS**, and the government's **Carer Gateway** support network.

ABI supports and Claro

Claro provides a full range of care and support services you need for a bright future. Fill out our **quick and easy enquiry form** and we will contact you to talk about the right home care services and support options for you.

We can provide everyday support such as assistance with cleaning, transport or shopping; comprehensive support like an extra hand with personal care routines or overnight assistance; **Supported Independent Living** supports so you can keep living in your home independently, or connect you with purpose-built **Specialist Disability Accommodation**.

Brain injuries often happen unexpectedly and managing the symptoms long-term can require adjustment. If you have funding for **Support Coordination** in your NDIS plan, our experienced and knowledgeable NDIS Support Coordination Providers can work with you to ensure you have access to the right services. **Read more about our Support Coordination services**.

We also partner with **Plena Healthcare** to provide allied health services you might need, like nursing, occupational and physiotherapy, speech pathology, dietetics, podiatry and behavioural supports.

We work with most major Australian funders of aged care and disability supports including the NDIS, TAC, NISQ, iCare, Commonwealth Home Support Program, Home Care Packages and more.

Resources

- **Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Health Direct**
- **Synapse, Australia's Brain Injury Organisation**
- **Brain Injury Australia**
- **Acquired Brain Injury, Better Health Channel Victoria**
- **Brain Injury Association of Tasmania**
- **Brain Injury South Australia**
- **Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service Queensland**
- **ABI Services New South Wales**
- **Carer Gateway**
- **The NDIS in each state**
- **NDIS Housing, living and support coordination services**