

Confusion After Brain Injury

What is confusion?

Confusion is the inability to think clearly. In the medical world, it is often called “post-traumatic amnesia” or “post-traumatic confusional state,” in which confusion is accompanied by memory loss, problems with attention, and feeling disoriented.

What are the effects of confusion?

Confusion is common following a brain injury. It usually improves shortly after the injury occurs, but in some instances, it can last weeks, months, or even longer.

Confusion occurs more often in older adults (>66 years old) but can happen to anyone following a brain injury. Typically, the more severe the brain injury, the more frequent and severe the confusion.

Symptoms associated with confusion include:

- Disruption in the sleep/wake cycle
- Trouble with processing thoughts
- Issues with movement and mobility
- Orientation deficits (i.e., not knowing where they are or what has recently happened to them)
- Inability to focus
- Forgetting information
- Trouble recognizing common objects
- Agitation
- Irritability
- Changes in awareness or understanding of something
- Decreased judgment
- Language impairment (i.e., trouble getting words out, or understanding what is being said)
- Saying or doing something on a whim

- Restlessness
- Hallucinations and/or delusions (in rare cases)

Recovery options

Most individuals recover from a confused state quickly after their injury, though they may be left with continuing cognitive and sleep problems. Long-term effects of confusion following a brain injury include challenges with completing daily tasks, difficulty meeting goals, and trouble keeping a job.

There are ways to help with confusion at home. They include:

- Writing things down
- Speaking more slowly
- Allowing time to process incoming information
- Repeating things
- Resting
- Avoiding high-stress environments

Managing confusion after a brain injury can be challenging. At the Brain Injury Association of Virginia, our trained experts are available to speak with you about your experience, answer your questions, and connect you with the best providers/resources for your needs. Our services are free and confidential.

To get in touch:

Call 1-800-444-6443

Visit biav.net

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This project is supported through state general funds (Contract #16-002A) administered by the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS).

Content last reviewed: 12.23