



Mood

Depression: Low mood can cloud the mind, making it difficult to concentrate, remember details and make decisions. Depression can also reduce energy and affect sleep which then impacts thinking.

Anxiety / Stress: When stressed or anxious concentration becomes a challenge as the mind often jumps from one concern to another. The constant state of alertness can be mentally exhausting, impacting memory.

PTSD: Flashbacks and intrusive memories can disrupt daily thinking making it hard to concentrate. Sleep disturbance from PTSD can make thinking harder.



Head Injury

A head injury can lead to changes in cognition. The impact depends on the severity, location and mechanism of the injury. Recovery often involves giving the brain time to heal and sometimes learning new strategies to help with daily tasks. Some head injuries may result in permanent changes in cognitive abilities whilst others may recover.

www.headinjurysymptoms.org
www.headway.org.uk

What can I do to help?

- 1) **Look after your self. Focus on getting a good sleep, eat/drink well, create a routine, engage in your rehabilitation and spend time with those you care about.**
- 2) **Use memory aids and prompts to build a memory system to help you remember things.**
- 3) **Ask for help and support from professionals e.g. Psychologist for mood difficulties or GP for pain or medication questions.**
- 4) **Be kind to yourself, and remember recovery takes time.**

This leaflet was developed by Dr Bethany Brown, NHS Fife in consultation with: Dr Craig Mackay, Dr Louise Young, Colette Ross and Dr Jackie Fearn.

If you require this information in a community language or alternative format e.g. Braille, audio, large print, BSL, Easy Read please contact the Equality and Human Rights Team at:
email:
fife.EqualityandHumanRights@nhs.scot
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Major Physical Trauma
Psychology Service

COGNITIVE DIFFICULTIES AFTER MAJOR PHYSICAL TRAUMA

A leaflet explaining factors which can impact thinking and remembering after a serious injury

Cognitive Difficulties

“Cognition” is thinking, learning, remembering and solving problems. It is everything our brain does to help us make sense of the world.

After a serious injury people often find that they have difficulties with cognition. People can worry something is permanently wrong.

This leaflet aims to explain some of the reasons cognition can be more difficult after a serious injury.

Factors which can Impact Cognition



Post ICU Syndrome (PICS)

PICS is a collection of symptoms which people can experience after being in the ICU ward. Symptoms can include; weakness, breathlessness, fatigue, memory issues, difficulty concentrating, anxiety, depression and difficulties with sleep.

According to the Society for Critical Care 30% to 80% of patients may have these kinds of problems after leaving the ICU. Many people improve during the first year after discharge from the hospital; other people find their problems continue beyond this.

www.criticalcarerecovery.com
www.icusteps.org



Pain

Being in pain can make it hard to concentrate. This makes it harder to take information in, which in turn means it is harder to remember it. Pain also impacts sleep, which impacts thinking. A domino effect!



Medication

Medications you took in hospital, or those you currently take could have an impact on cognition. Medications, which have a sedative effect can impact how well and how quickly we can do tasks such as finding words, remembering things and taking in information.



Sleep

Sleep has a big impact on cognition. When we get a good nights sleep our brain has time to ‘tidy up’ and organise our thoughts and memories.

When we don’t get enough sleep our thinking might feel fuzzy, slower and it can be harder to remember things.

