

Impact of Alcohol and Drugs on Recovery after Brain Injury



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Impact of Alcohol and Drugs on recovery after Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

Any type of substance, whether drugs or alcohol, can affect brain function for all individuals, whether they have brain injury or not. With brain injury the effects of alcohol or drugs are multiplied.

1. People who begin or continue to use alcohol or drugs after an acquired brain injury may not recover as quickly or as completely.
After brain injury your brain is more vulnerable to the effects of alcohol and drugs. Due to lost brain cells, the remaining cells must work harder for the person to do the same activity as they did before their brain injury. The use of alcohol and recreational drugs can interfere with recovery and remaining brain cells may not be able to function as well.
2. After brain injury alcohol and drugs have a more powerful effect. Alcohol and drugs affect you faster and have more of an impact on you after a brain injury.
3. People with brain injury are more likely to feel low mood or depressed. Alcohol (which is a depressant) and drugs make this problem worse.
4. Any difficulties you have as a result of your brain injury may be made worse and become more obvious to others when you take alcohol or drugs; in particular, for people whose brain injury has caused difficulties with balance, movement or speech, will further reduce abilities in these areas when they use alcohol or drugs.
5. In some people with brain injury using alcohol or nonprescription drugs can increase the risk of having a seizure.
6. You are more susceptible to having another brain injury or other injuries if you are using drugs or alcohol. A person who has difficulty thinking clearly, walking or reacting quickly due to brain injury is more likely to put themselves in a situation where they could have another brain injury, for example, engage in risk taking behaviour, act impulsively, make bad decisions. The risk is even more where the person with brain injury is using alcohol or drugs.
7. Alcohol and drugs can interfere with your prescription medication.

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Policy on Alcohol use

The National Rehabilitation Hospital recognises the importance of promoting the health and well being of its patients by encouraging a healthy lifestyle and a responsible attitude to the use of alcohol.

Unapproved or unauthorized consumption of alcohol is not permitted in the hospital or its grounds. In general, before consuming alcohol, all patients should seek advice from their Consultant as it may be contraindicated due to their illness or because of prescribed medications.

Staff or others are not permitted to provide alcohol to patients or visitors in the National Rehabilitation Hospital.

This policy is aimed at promoting a responsible attitude and sensible approach to alcohol.

Policy on illegal substance abuse

Taking or possession of illegal substances is a criminal offence and is not allowed in the NRH or its grounds. The hospital has a responsibility to report such incidents.

The hospital is committed to supporting patients with a dependency problem through appropriate referral and treatment. Discharge may be deemed necessary while such appropriate treatment is being implemented.

Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality, but this may be affected by the requirements of the law.