

## **Information about Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)**

Traumatic brain injury is injury to the brain resulting from externally inflicted trauma. It is very common and can happen to anyone at any time. The major cause is motor vehicle crashes followed by sports injuries, assaults and falls. TBI can range from a bump on the head to a catastrophic injury, with serious consequences. Up to 95% of all TBI's are mild or moderate. Mild TBI's are also known as concussion. Approximately 24,000 New Zealanders suffer from concussion each year. Usually the person has no outer signs, hence it is an "invisible" injury.

### **Common Symptoms of Traumatic Brain Injury:**

Symptoms of TBI are caused by nerve damage and sometimes bleeding in the brain and damage to brain and neck muscles. In most cases, these are not permanent and many resolve in one month. Many people with mild and moderate TBI fully recover within three to six months. However, some people don't regain 100% of their previous level of functioning.

The person may experience a few or all of the following:

- Fatigue - One of the most common symptoms. Tire easily, especially by the afternoon. Need more sleep. Quickly drained by physical activities. Mental exertion e.g. study can have a profound effect. Take longer to complete work e.g. assignments, tests and exams.
- Headaches – Common and sometimes occur daily. Stress caused by worry, fatigue and concentrating too long may also produce headaches.
- Poor attention and concentration – Reduced ability to focus, difficulty in doing more than one thing at a time. May have trouble studying and completing projects, listening to a lecture, reading, watching TV etc. Easily distracted. Heightened sensitivity to noise.
- Slowed thinking – Find most forms of communication tiring. Slow to understand what is being said and respond to questions. Take longer to do tasks e.g. assignments, daily activities.
- Poor short-term memory – During early stages, usually not very good. Forgetful e.g. can't remember people's names, what being said and where put things. Inhibited ability to study and remember facts. Usually improves over time.
- Irritability – Reduced ability to control emotions. Have a short fuse and get easily frustrated. Impulsive behaviour.
- Personality and mood changes/swings.

**Treatment** usually includes rest to manage fatigue and avoidance of stress and pressure. May have to reduce/limit activities including study, gradually increasing, as condition improves.

The University of Auckland encourages partnerships between Faculties, student services and students, to support students achieve their academic potential.

**Ways staff can assist:**

- Give students opportunities to talk with you early in the semester about their needs.
- Make information and readings available early.
- Repeat and rephrase information.
- Prepare test and exam questions carefully to ensure the question is clear.
- Allow the students time to take short naps. There are rest spaces at the City, Epsom and Tamaki campuses.
- Give the student any photocopied handouts on A3 paper so it is easier to read.

**Information has been sourced from:**

- Brain Injury association of New Zealand: [www.brain-injury.org.nz](http://www.brain-injury.org.nz)
- Tombaugh, T. (1999). Head Injury and Concussion. Introduction Centre for Memory and Research. Carleton University. Ottawa, Ontario.

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## CONTACTS FOR MORE INFORMATION OR SUPPORT

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### **Student Disability Services**

Room 036 Basement  
ClockTower Building  
22 Princes Street  
Auckland  
Ph: 09 373 7599 ext 82936  
Fax: 09 308 2354  
[www.eo.auckland.ac.nz](http://www.eo.auckland.ac.nz)

[www.disability.auckland.ac.nz](http://www.disability.auckland.ac.nz)

[disabilities@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:disabilities@auckland.ac.nz)

### **University Medical Services**

City Campus Clinic  
Level 3, Student Commons Building  
2 Alfred Street  
Ph: 373 7599 ext 87681

Grafton Campus Clinic  
The "White House"  
151 Park Rd  
Ph: 373 7599 ext 86962

Tamaki Campus Clinic (Registered Nurse Clinic only)  
Building 730.110  
Morrin Road  
Ph: 373 7599 ext 86677

Epsom Campus Clinic  
R Block, Gate 4  
60 Epsom Avenue, Epsom  
Ph: 373 7599 ext 48526

### **Student Learning Services**

Ph: +64 9 373 7599 ext 88850  
[sls@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:sls@auckland.ac.nz)

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