

Understand the basics about ABI

Build your knowledge so you can provide effective support.

Definition

An Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) is an injury to the brain after birth caused by:

- trauma, often a bump to the head or a jolt to the body
- a medical event, including an illness or a treatment for an illness.

Types of ABI

Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

is an umbrella term



Three types of brain injury.

Source:

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ABI is an umbrella term for three types of brain injury.

1. Concussion:

- a mild traumatic injury to the brain usually caused by a bump to the head or jolt to the body
- negatively affects the brain
- recovery can take between 4 weeks and 3 months depending on the severity of the injury
- requires rest to allow healing
- increases vulnerability to subsequent injury (Second Impact Syndrome), if activity is resumed too soon
- also called mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI).

2. Traumatic brain injury (TBI):

- a significant injury usually caused by a bump, blow, or shake to the head or body
- changes how the brain usually functions
- can alter a child's emotional, intellectual, communication, and social behaviour
- requires rest to allow healing
- can range from moderate to severe
- more prevalent in children living in areas of social and economic deprivation or who were impulsive or risk takers prior to injury
- can result in long-term changes and challenges.

3. Non-traumatic brain injuries:

- caused by internal events or illnesses, such as strokes, tumours, choking, infection, or cancer treatments
- similar characteristics to TBI.

Source: Adapted from *Educational implications of acquired brain injury*, by Sue Walker, Brain and Spine Foundation, UK, 2009.

Causes of ABI

Acquired brain injuries can be caused by a wide range of events.



Source:

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The need to raise awareness

Recent research indicates that ABIs, particularly from **undiagnosed concussions**, are having a significant negative impact on the wellbeing, learning, and wairua of a large number of children and young people in our learning environments.

Due to a lack of understanding, children and young people may find:

- they do not receive support that assists their recovery
- they are placed in situations that may create stress and anxiety, increase risk of injury, and inhibit recovery
- changes to behaviour and difficulties in learning may be misinterpreted.

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