



# Aging With a Brain Injury

People with brain injuries are living longer because we have better ways to care for them after the injury. It's important to understand what it's like to grow older with a brain injury, especially for young people who may live many years with this condition.

As people age, they may notice changes in their thinking, movement, and senses, like slower memory or needing more rest. Older adults with brain injuries may face these changes, plus problems caused by the injury.

Brain injuries can lead to long-term physical and emotional challenges that make aging harder, such as trouble sleeping, seizures, hormone issues, and bathroom problems. Old symptoms from a brain injury like headaches, dizziness, or trouble concentrating might return. A brain injury can affect feelings and mood for many years. These feelings can be harder to manage if you feel alone or if it's difficult to join social activities.

**Aging and brain injury can affect each other, but there are many things you can do to stay strong, safe, and active.**

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## 1. Watch Your Thinking and Memory

Pay attention to changes like:

- Trouble remembering names, dates, or tasks
- Feeling confused or overwhelmed
- Difficulty planning or organizing
- Needing more time to understand new information

**What helps your brain be healthy:**

Keep your brain active. Talk with others, read, do puzzles, or try a new hobby. Make sure you get enough sleep and get your hearing and vision checked regularly.

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## 2. Prevent Falls

Both aging and past brain injury can affect your balance.

**Here are ways to stay safe:**

- Do exercises that build strength and improve balance
- Keep your home well-lit and remove tripping hazards
- Use grab bars in the bathroom
- Wear sturdy shoes
- Use a cane or walker if you need one — they help you stay safe and active

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### **3. Take Care of Your Mood**

You may feel:

- Sad or depressed
- Nervous or worried
- Easily frustrated
- Less interested in socializing

These feelings are valid — and treatable. If mood changes affect your daily life, talk with your healthcare provider. You deserve support.

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### **4. Use Medications Safely**

As you age, you may take more medicines. Some medicines can cause:

- Sleepiness
- Confusion
- Dizziness
- Slower thinking
- Higher fall risk

**To stay safe:**

- Keep an updated list of your medicines
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review it often
- Avoid alcohol with medicines that make you sleepy

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## 5. Manage Tiredness (Fatigue)

It's normal to feel more tired after a brain injury, and this tiredness can increase as you get older.

**You can help manage this by:**

- Pacing your activities: do a little, rest a little
- Planning harder tasks when you have the most energy
- Limiting loud sounds and screens
- Resting before you get overly tired

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## 6. Stay Organized

As you get older, everyday tasks might seem more difficult.

**Tools that can help:**

- Phone alarms, reminders, or calendars
- Written routines or checklists
- Keeping your home organized and simple
- Using a pill organizer for medications

These tools support your independence — they're not signs of weakness.

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## 7. Get Good Sleep

Good sleep helps protect your brain.

**You can improve sleep by:**

- Going to bed and waking up at the same time each day
- Limiting looking at screens before bedtime
- Avoiding long naps
- Asking your provider about sleep apnea if you feel tired all day

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## 8. Healthy Habits for Your Body and Brain

You can support your health by:

- Moving, such as walking or doing light strength exercises
- Eating a balanced diet with whole foods, fruit, vegetables, and unsaturated fats
- Taking care of your heart by managing blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes
- Socializing and spending time with friends and family
- Connect with local brain injury support groups and community resources
- Avoiding drugs and alcohol: these can make brain injuries worse

Your brain and body work together — caring for one helps the other.

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## When to Reach Out for Help

Contact your healthcare team if you notice:

- Big changes in thinking or memory
- More falls or balance problems
- Major mood changes
- Strong or long-lasting sadness or worry
- Trouble doing daily tasks that used to be easy

Getting help early can make a big difference.