# Action for Brain Injury Week – Wake up to fatigue!

Today marks the start of Headway's Action For Brain Injury Week 2019 (20-26 May).

The purpose of the awareness week is to challenge the misconceptions formed by the often hidden nature of brain injury. This year's Action For Brain Injury Week is focusing on the debilitating and stigmatising effects of fatigue after brain injury, an aspect which is often misunderstood.

## What is acquired brain injury?

An injury caused to the brain since birth. There are many possible causes, which may include a fall, a road accident, tumour, or stroke. An acquired brain injury can cause a number of debilitating side effects, one of which is fatigue.

## What does fatigue mean?

Fatigue is experienced by everyone at some point after a period of physical or mental activity. It is a signal from our bodies telling us to take a break.

For some, it may feel like overwhelming tiredness, which makes them unable to complete normal activities of daily living. Many say they feel exhausted, lacking in energy, unable to motivate themselves, or sleepy. For others, it may worsen difficulties associated with their injury, for example, forgetfulness, irritability, slurred speech, distractibility or dizziness.

## Is fatigue different for those with an acquired brain injury?

Yes. The fatigue that many people experience in everyday life is usually time-limited and can be alleviated by rest. For those who have an acquired brain injury, pathological fatigue is an effect which can be particularly debilitating because it may not improve with rest. It is likely that pathological fatigue will significantly impact on people being able to do the activities they want to do.



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## Is pathological fatigue the same for everyone with an acquired brain injury?

No. The extent to which a person with an acquired brain injury will suffer from pathological fatigue is heavily affected by the depth of their brain injury. Fatigue is often a result of direct damage to the brain's structures. It follows therefore that the greater the extent of the damage caused to the ascending reticular activating system (ARAS) which is the part of the brain which maintains alertness, the greater the depth of fatigue will be.

The extent of fatigue and its effects on the person's daily life is therefore very different for someone who has suffered a subtle brain injury, to someone who has a catastrophic brain injury.

## Where can I get help for someone struggling with the effects of acquired brain injury?

There are a number of organisations nationally which support those living with an acquired brain injury. These include:

- Headway
- Child Brain Injury Trust
- Brain Injury Group

Find out more about Lester Aldridge's expertise in handling serious injury cases or please do not hesitate to contact us.



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