



Using Alcohol & Drugs after a Brain Injury

**QUEENSLAND
SPINAL CORD INJURIES
SERVICE (QSCIS)**

www.health.qld.gov.au/qscis

Brain injury results in a loss of brain cells. This means that the remaining brain cells must work harder than they did before the injury, to do some of the same activities.

Using alcohol and drugs also affects your brain cells and how they function. Therefore combining alcohol and drugs with a brain injury can have a serious impact on you.

It is important to remember some basic facts about drinking and using drugs after a brain injury.

1

Using drugs and alcohol with a brain injury will interfere with your recovery.

If you begin to use alcohol and other drugs after a brain injury, you won't recover as much or as fast as people who don't use these substances. Any progress you may have made could be lost when you use alcohol and drugs. Skills that could have been regained could be lost too. In addition, alcohol and other drugs interfere with the effectiveness of prescribed medications.

2

Using drugs and alcohol with a brain injury will increase your chances of having a seizure.

Some people who have a brain injury will have an increased risk for seizures. Using alcohol and drugs will increase your chance of having a seizure even if you are at the lowest level of risk following your brain injury. Drugs and alcohol will also prevent seizure medication from working.

3

Alcohol and drugs will affect you more quickly and have a greater impact on you following a brain injury.

You will become intoxicated more quickly following a brain injury and the effects of alcohol or other drugs will be much greater. Using alcohol and drugs will make it more difficult for you to function effectively.

For example you will:

- Be less able to control what you say or do. This can lead to risk taking, arguments, or other socially inappropriate behaviour.
- Have problems with concentration, memory, problem solving, learning new information and other thinking skills.
- Have increased difficulties with balance, walking and speaking.
- Experience more problems with depression.

These things will make your disability more obvious to other people.

Remember that when you are under the influence of drugs and alcohol, you will not be able to effectively use any coping strategies you may have learned.

4

Using drugs and alcohol can damage your brain and cause your brain injury to become worse.

Alcohol causes direct damage to your brain and can cause loss of brain cells. Because you already have damage to your brain, the use of alcohol or drugs could make your injury worse. This would add to the effects of your injury.

Also, a person who has difficulty thinking clearly, walking smoothly, and reacting quickly, due to using drugs and alcohol with a brain injury, is at a greater risk of having another injury.



For further information please talk to your doctor, social worker or other team members.

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