

Prevention Resources

Here are some great websites and organizations that are doing work in the area of prevention:

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) provide information and resources about concussion/mild traumatic brain injury, recovery and prevention. There are specific resources for [physicians and patients](#), coaches, athletes and parents in [high school sports](#) and [youth sports](#) and falls prevention for [seniors](#).

[ThinkFirst Foundation Canada](#) provides information on such things as snow sports safety tips, helmet selection and fitting tips, concussion information, concussion assessment and return to play guidelines. There are also well developed teaching resources.



[The Community Against Preventable Injuries](#) ([preventable.ca](#)) focus is on changing attitudes and behaviours towards preventable injuries and safety at home, at play, at work and on the road.

[Protect your head](#) from [BrainTrust Canada Association](#) is an experiential site. Get ready to experience what it may feel like to have a brain injury.

[Prevent a Fall](#) provides tips for fall prevention for those over 65. However, whatever age we are, none of us are immune to falling.

Kids and Teens



[Safe Kids Canada](#) has a mission to lead and inspire a culture of safety across the country in order to reduce unintentional injuries, the leading cause of death among children and youth in Canada. As a national leader, Safe Kids Canada uses a collaborative and innovative approach to develop

partnerships, conduct research, educate and advocate with the goal of preventing serious injuries among children, youth and their families.



www.injuryfreekarma.com **Injury Free Karma** - The BC Injury Prevention Centre, part of Trauma Services, Vancouver Coastal Health, develops innovative injury prevention programs using best practices, research and social marketing strategies. It is a specialized lifesaving injury prevention program targeting Sport & Recreational users, including mountain bikers, cyclists, skiers, snowboarders, hikers, kayakers & the general public. The website, www.injuryfreekarma.com, promotes 4-key survival skills in sport & rec featuring 2 minute video segments with athletes, flash games and wipe out videos. Website is home to the Injury Free Karma's twitter, facebook, you tube and iTunes pages. The mantra: *Injury Free Karma® is 100% possible! One positive action at a time!*



Health & Brain Fitness

[Heart and Stroke Foundation](http://www.heartandstroke.ca) provides information on the signs of a stroke, how to control blood pressure, helps you understand cholesterol, helps you achieve a healthy weight and provides healthy living guidelines.



[Sharp Brains](http://www.sharpbrains.com) is a market research and publishing firm tracking brain fitness and cognitive health. Go to the How-To Guide and Teasers (brain games) sections.

[Posit Science](http://www.posit-science.com) is a company that researches and markets “brain training software.” Good information in the section “About the Brain.”

PositScience®

Brain training software

Brain Games



[Fit Brains](#) provides brain games.

[Lumosity](#) provides courses and games to improve attention, memory, processing speed and cognitive flexibility.

Sleep Hygiene

Brain Injury Information Sheet

Sleep is a natural stage of rest that affects our daily function as well as our physical and mental wellbeing. Following a brain injury it is very important that you get a good restorative sleep every night to help your recovery. Lack of sleep and fatigue can increase all of your symptoms and slow down your progress.

Sleep hygiene refers to the practices, habits and environmental factors that influence sleep.

Here are some suggestions to help you get a good night's sleep:

- Set up a routine time to go to bed and to get up each morning-and stick to it even on weekends! Consistency is very important in developing a good sleep-wake cycle. Most importantly always get up at the same time in the morning
- Engage in calming activities 30 minutes before going to bed
 - ✓ Avoid stimulating movies, books or exercise during this time;
 - ✓ Some people find a warm bath an hour or so before bed to be relaxing
 - ✓ Avoid eating a heavy meal immediately prior to bed. If you are hungry you might want to eat a light snack. Some people find drinking warm milk to be helpful.
 - ✓ Lie down when feeling sleepy
- Regular daily exercise can improve restful sleep. This includes stretching and aerobic exercise. Complete any exercise at least three hours before going to sleep
- Avoid alcohol and limit caffeine intake from any source (e.g. coffee, tea, cola, chocolate) in the afternoon and evening
- Extra sleep may be necessary in the days immediately following an injury. However avoid napping during the day if possible. If a nap is necessary, try to limit it to less than twenty minutes. It is better to have a nap earlier in the day (before noon) rather than later in the day
- Use your bed only for sleep and intimacy. It is not a place to watch TV, read or work on your laptop
- If you are unable to sleep for 20-30 minutes after retiring, get up and engage in a calm activity such as reading a relaxing book or listening to quiet music. Return to bed once you start to feel sleepy. Repeat this cycle until you fall asleep. Avoid lying awake in bed for long periods of time. You want to teach your body and mind that bed is a place to

sleep with the goal of eliciting sleep as an automatic response when you retire for the night

- Minimize noise, light and temperature extremes during sleep with earplugs, window blinds, an electric blanket or an air conditioner. Even the slightest nighttime noises or luminescent lights can disrupt the quality of your sleep. Try to keep your bedroom at a comfortable temperature neither too hot (above 75 degrees) nor too cold (below 54 degrees)
- Commit to trying these strategies for at least 4 weeks before deciding whether or not they work
- Some people find that combining good sleep hygiene with other strategies, such as deep breathing, meditation or visualization is useful in achieving a restful and restorative sleep

Other Suggestions

- Melatonin is a naturally occurring hormone that is available as an over the counter drug. It may be helpful in restoring the sleep cycle for some people. Although it is available without a prescription you should talk with your Doctor before taking it
- If self-management strategies are not improving your sleep then you should talk to your Doctor about short-term medical management

Sleep Hygiene

Brain Injury Information Sheet

Following a brain injury many people find that they have less energy than before. Everyday situations that require physical, cognitive and/or emotional stamina may be exhausting. Energy conservation is about being smart with your energy resources.

If you think about your energy resources as being similar to money in a bank account then you will understand 'energy conservation' is similar to being on a budget. You manage your energy by making deposits and withdrawals based on your requirements. If you empty your energy bank account by noon then you will not have enough to do all that you need to do in a day.

Here are some suggestions to help you balance your energy budget:

1. Save your energy

- Make a list of what you need
- Gather the items you need before you start
- Use good lighting and appropriate workspace
- Limit distractions and avoid clutter.
- Sit to work
- Push rather than lift things. Use a wheeled cart or dolly to carry things

2. Restore your energy

- Try to include activities in your day that bring you pleasure and add to your energy bank
- For example set aside time to read an interesting book, talk with an upbeat friend or family member on the phone, listen to music and find a way to be playful or laugh

3. Use your energy wisely

- **Plan**
 - ✓ Take time each evening to review the day and plan out the next day
 - ✓ List activities and tasks that need to be done. Remember to include rest breaks
 - ✓ Take time each week to plan out the next week
 - ✓ Spread heavier tasks out over the week. Do harder tasks when you are most rested
- **Pace**
 - ✓ Give yourself plenty of time to do each task
 - ✓ Balance activities with rest breaks. Rest before you are tired
 - ✓ Break up a large task by doing a little each day.
 - ✓ Alternate between heavy and light tasks and between physical and cognitive demands
- **Prioritize**
 - ✓ Decide what is most important
 - ✓ Ask or allow other people to help you when possible
 - ✓ Be sure to include activities you enjoy doing

Tips for Managing Thinking Problems

Brain Injury Information Sheet

Following a brain injury you may notice difficulties with memory, concentration and attention. You may also find that it takes longer to collect your thoughts and express yourself. These are some of the common thinking problems following a brain injury. Typically they improve with time but that does not make them any less annoying while you have them.

While you are recovering here are some practical strategies that you can use to help:

- Reduce distractions in your environment when you are concentrating. For example, turn off the television when you are trying to read; ask the children not to interrupt while you are making dinner
- Work on one task at a time. This helps to keep your focus and helps you from feeling overwhelmed
- Give yourself more time than usual to complete tasks. Work for short periods and take breaks. This will help reduce the stress that can impact on your ability to concentrate
- When concentration is critical for a task, pick a time when your energy level is at its best
- Avoid or limit your exposure to noisy, busy or overly stimulating places. It may be helpful to use earplugs when in a noisy environment or organize your workspace to minimize clutter and visual distractions. This will help you focus and it will reduce feelings of confusion
- To stay focused during conversations, maintain good eye contact with the person. Also repeat back what was said or ask the person to repeat the information if you missed it
- If reading is difficult, it can help to read aloud and read only for short manageable periods of time
- If you are forgetful, record important information in a notebook, a calendar, an organizer or even a tape recorder and keep it with you to use throughout your day. Make this a habit
- Keep items such as car keys, umbrella, calendar, message pad, cell phone or day timer in designated places
- Use lists for shopping. Use sticky notes around the house, for example at the door to remind you to check the locks, the stove, the iron etc. before you leave
- Use your answering machine or your computer e-mail to leave reminders for yourself
- Use external cues or prompts to draw you back to a task. For example use an egg timer or the microwave timer when cooking or doing laundry
- Some watches, cell phones and palm pilots have programmable timers to remind you things such as appointments, when to take medication, people to call etc.
- Use appliances that have automatic shut off, such as kettle or iron
- Write out a list of what you need to do and plan a schedule for the day, week and month at home and at work. Review your list and schedule every morning and update it as necessary
- To assist with organization, it can help to break the task down into manageable steps prior to starting the task
- Pre-planning your activities is useful. It helps you to be prepared to handle daily situations...
For example if you have a medical appointment write down your list of concerns and question so you do not forget what you need to know. If you are driving somewhere unfamiliar plan

ahead by having the address and a contact number with you and reviewing the directions before you leave

- Do not make decisions in haste. Be sure to take the time to review all possible perspectives of a situation and discuss the situation with someone you trust before deciding, especially if it is a significant decision
- Count to ten before you act on anything. Consider whether you are safe and whether you are using good judgment
- Remember that your thinking ability is affected by other symptoms such as headaches, poor sleep, dizziness, fatigue, low mood and stress. It is critical that you get a good restorative sleep at night and pace all of your activities to allow for rest periods throughout your day. As these symptoms settle down you will find that your thinking problems also settle down
- Be patient and have realistic expectations of yourself It takes time and practice to use these techniques consistently but once you have formed the habit they will be very helpful in managing your thinking difficulties while you are recovering