
Alcohol related brain impairment - memory loss

Memory impairment is one of the most common problems associated with alcohol related brain impairment (ARBI). Some people struggle to remember things from day-to-day while others have difficulty remembering skills, knowledge or information they have learnt in the past.

People with ARBI can experience problems with:

- Learning new information
- Retrieving information stored in their memory
- Remembering recent events or information they have recently acquired
- Fabricating memories because they cannot remember.

People with ARBI can be encouraged to adopt strategies that will help them to improve their memory and cope with the daily frustrations of their impairment.

Understanding memory limitations

If the person with ARBI is aware of their memory limits, they can make allowances to deal with it. Retaining information can be improved by:

- Planning ahead and allowing adequate time to read and re-read information
- Reducing distractions while memorising information
- Learning information with a clear mind – memory difficulties can be made worse by tiredness, stress, anxiety, anger or intoxication.

Repeating and rephrasing information

One of the simplest ways to improve memory is to rehearse information to be stored. Encourage people with ARBI to:

- Ask for instructions or information to be repeated.
- Rephrase instructions in their own words and check that they have understood properly.
- When introduced to someone, immediately repeat the person's name and use it as much as possible.

Using memory aids

Using memory aids helps people with ARBI to make sure things are not forgotten. There is a range of aids available and their effectiveness depends on what best suits each person.

Some useful aids include:

- Writing lists for shopping or jobs to do
- Keeping a diary and using it as a daily organiser to record appointments, chores and important dates
- Setting alarms and timers as reminders – for example, to take medication
- Preparing written reminders, such as posters on the bathroom wall or notes next to the bathroom mirror
- Using a whiteboard to clearly display daily routines, appointments and chores.

Where to get help

- **arbias** – specialist services for people with alcohol and substance related brain impairment
Tel. (03) 8388 1222
- Your regional Department of Human Services office
- Family Drug Help – for information and support for people concerned about a relative or friend using drugs Tel. 1300 660 068

Things to remember

- It is important to learn new information with a clear mind and without distractions.
- Memory can be improved if information to be learned is repeated frequently and rephrased.
- Using memory aids is a good way to ensure things are not forgotten.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

ARBIAS

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