

Alcohol related brain impairment - support

Alcohol related brain impairment (ARBI) affects the way people think and behave in everyday life. They often experience feelings of anxiety and stress and an inability to cope. You can help someone with ARBI by assisting them to establish daily routines and by being there to support and guide them.

Avoid overloading them with too much information at once and break information down into small logical points. Always give the person plenty of time to process information or complete a task at their own pace.

Learning to live with ARBI

An important and often difficult step for those with ARBI is developing self-awareness and insight into their condition so that they can learn to live with it. They may need professional help with:

- Accepting that they have a brain injury
- Understanding how this injury affects their memory, thinking and behaviour
- Setting realistic goals and making plans that take their condition into account.

Establishing daily routines

People with ARBI live to their best potential when their life is organised and follows a good structure. Take some time to help in establishing routines so that all activities follow a predictable pattern. Aim to build routine into all aspects of their life such as:

- Household chores
- Personal hygiene
- Shopping
- Social activities
- Employment
- Appointments.

Working on planning and organising skills will help them to reduce stress and cope with everyday life.

Communicating effectively

ARBI affects communication skills and the ability to take in new information and ideas. When you are communicating with someone with ARBI, it will help if you:

- Break down information into points or steps
- Repeat instructions or important points
- Use familiar language
- Slow down when you talk
- Give information in written as well as verbal form, preferably in point form
- Restrict discussions to one topic or issue at a time.

Minimise changes to routines or environment

To help reduce any feelings of anxiety or stress in times of change, try to:

- Gradually introduce changes in small ways
- Plan well ahead and allow plenty of time for discussion
- Surround the person with familiar objects and people as much as possible.

Be available to listen and support

Some other simple ways you can help someone with ARBI include:

- **Listen** – provide a friendly ear and let them talk about problems and frustrations.
- **Guide** – in stressful times or times of change be available to help guide them through the decision-making process.
- **Give feedback** – give honest and helpful feedback on their choices or decisions.
- **Prompt** – help them to follow routines by reminding them of activities and appointments planned for the day.

Get professional help

Keep in mind that professional help is available to people with ARBI and their carers. Services include:

- Counselling
- Group sessions
- Anger management courses
- Relaxation training.

Where to get help

- **arbias** – specialist service for people with alcohol and other 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

- People with ARBI benefit from having structure and routine in their lives.
- Be aware of how you communicate and try to break down any important information into points or steps.
- Be available to listen, guide and support.

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

ARBIAS

Copyright © 1999/2010 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.

- This Better Health Channel fact sheet has passed through a rigorous approval process. For the latest updates and more information visit www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au.