



London Health Sciences Centre
Trauma Program

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Reintroducing Stimulating Activities into the Life of a Patient with a Traumatic Brain Injury

Traumatic Brain Injury

Patients with a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) often have post head injury symptoms which increase when they become too stimulated. *Symptoms include:*

- **Physical:** Headaches, dizziness, nausea or vomiting, light or noise sensitivity, ringing in the ears (tinnitus), balance difficulties, blurred or double vision, feeling drowsy, difficulty falling asleep or difficulty staying asleep.
- **Cognitive:** difficulty concentrating, making decisions or problem solving, word finding, memory problems, and feeling “foggy”
- **Mood:** Irritability, restlessness, feeling frustrated, anxiety, feeling tearful

How to Reintroduce Stimulating Activities

Start with 10-15 minutes of a new, stimulating activity and monitor symptoms for 30-40 minutes.

If the stimulating activity did not change the way the patient felt (i.e. did not cause a headache, increased fatigue, restlessness or other symptoms) then add another 10-15 minutes to the task the next.

If they have a change in symptoms, it is either too much stimulation or too early to introduce stimulation.

Remember, some days will be better than others. If the patient experiences new symptoms, eliminate the newest stimulating activity introduced.

Stimulating Activities

When the patient has minimal to no post head injury symptoms (i.e. headache, increased fatigue, restlessness, vision sensitivity, etc.) you may begin to introduce stimulating activities into their daily routine. Stimulating activities should be added into the patient’s daily routine in a step-wise manner.

This should be done in a gradual manner and should start with short periods of an activity to assess tolerance of the task.

Examples of Stimulating Activities

Physical exertion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brisk walking• Running, Cycling
Mental stimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading• Games, Puzzles• Banking• Visiting with family/friends (more than 2-3 people at once)
Environmental Stimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Noisy environments• Bright lights• Television, Computers• Listening to music• Smart phones