

**WINTER  
2021**



**IMPACT**



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# HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM BRAIN INJURY CANADA

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This past year has been a challenging one. As we continue to live through the global COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to experience isolation, interruption to treatments and services, and a significant strain on our mental health and well-being.

But despite all the year has thrown at us, the brain injury community persevered. We at Brain Injury Canada are impressed every day by your strength, resolve, and compassion.

We also know that this time of year can be hard - we're separated from our families and friends; the weather keeps us indoors; and the effects of the pandemic are far from over. It's okay if you don't feel quite as celebratory this holiday season. On behalf of all of us at Brain Injury Canada, we just want to say that we are proud of you and grateful to have your continued support. You help build our community, and help us keep going - especially during hard times like the past couple of years. You are the reason we love what we do, and you give us new ideas for ways to support the brain injury community in the months (and years) to come.

No matter how you feel or how you celebrate this year, we hope that you find moments of peace and love, and that your new year is as bright as it can be.

We look forward to doing even more with you in 2022.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michelle McDonald', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michelle McDonald  
Executive Director  
Brain Injury Canada

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# HOW TO COMBAT COVID-19 FATIGUE

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COVID-19 has changed life as we know it on a global scale, and we're all tired. We want to be able to hug our families, be with our friends, or go to our appointments and feel safe.

You've probably heard a lot of people say they're 'so done' with COVID-19. You might have even had this thought yourself - particularly as the holidays approach.

You are not alone. The feeling of being exhausted by COVID-19 and 'done' with everything related to COVID-19 is called COVID-19 fatigue.

As tough as it's been and as real as COVID-19 pandemic fatigue is, now is not the time to give up. It's incredibly important to continue following health and safety measures for our health and the health of others so that the pandemic will come to an end.

While you can't fully eliminate COVID-19 pandemic fatigue, there are ways you can cope with it.

## Build enjoyable routines

Routines can help reduce stress and guesswork. If you already know what you're going to be doing in the morning and evening, you don't have to worry about planning/decision-making as you go.

There's also something comforting about having a routine that is predictable during uncertain times. There's not a lot we can control right now. Our household routines provide us with some stability.



# HOW TO COMBAT COVID-19 FATIGUE

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## Embrace your feelings in a safe space

This pandemic is challenging and generates a lot of emotions. You may find it overwhelming and frustrating trying to express yourself. You may also choose to try and suppress your emotions because facing them feels so challenging.

Find a safe space in your home where you can express your emotions freely and safely. This may mean writing them down, listening to a certain type of music, or even talking to yourself out loud. Here are a few ways you can safely express challenging emotions.

## Treat yourself with self-care activities

We all need some special treatment - that includes special treatment from ourselves. Self-care is doing something that is purely for your own health and well-being. This can include a bath, your favourite movie, a special snack, or anything that makes you happy.

## Practice positive affirmations

In stressful times like a pandemic, it's easy to think negatively all the time. This can be particularly true if you are experiencing disruptions to your treatment/recovery, or spending more time alone.

Try to disrupt that negative thinking by practicing positive affirmations. Look in a mirror and recite some positive things about yourself or your situation.

[Here are some positive affirmations you can try.](#)

# HOW TO COMBAT COVID-19 FATIGUE

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## Take care of yourself with exercise & a healthy diet

Exercising and eating healthy foods will help you feel your best. When you feel your best, you will feel more equipped to handle COVID-19 pandemic fatigue.

## Talk to others

While we may have to limit our interactions with others, that doesn't mean you can't find creative ways to stay in touch with your friends and families. There's video calls, emails, texting, and phone calls.

When you do talk to your friends or family members, don't be afraid to talk about what you've been experiencing. Ask the other person whether they are in a position to listen to you talk about what's on your mind. If they say yes, let them know how you're feeling.

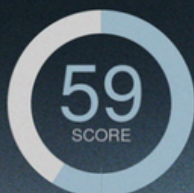
Make sure you respect the other person's boundaries and needs when you're having these conversations.

## Minimize your interactions with news and social media

While it's important to stay informed about COVID-19, health and safety measures, and vaccination updates, it's easy to get overwhelmed with all the information.

Choose a couple of reliable, reputable sources for COVID-19 information, and limit your news and social media time if it's causing stress.





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# SIGN THE E-PETITION FOR A HIDDEN DISABILITY SYMBOL

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**It is time. It is right. It is needed.**

There are millions of Canadians living with an invisible/hidden disability. People see them and make assumptions about their needs and their lives because they can't see what they live with every day.

The current symbol for disability is not enough. It excludes a whole community of people who need supports and services, but feel invalidated because of ignorance and are often asked to prove their disability.

In partnership with [Hidden Disability Symbol Canada](#) & [The Brain Injury Society of Toronto](#), we are circulating a petition to the government calling for the consideration of a symbol that is more representative - because just because you can't see something doesn't mean it's not real.

This petition is open until **February 5, 2022**. We need your support. Please sign the petition and help us move forward towards a society where everyone with a disability feels seen.

**[Sign the petition](#)**

# COVID-19 SAFETY MEASURES FOR THE HOLIDAYS

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There are several protective measures you can take to make your holiday experiences as comfortable as possible. This includes

- Vaccination
- Wearing a mask
- Washing your hands
- Maintaining a physical distance of 6 feet from others outside your household when possible
- Clean/disinfect regularly

For more information about safety measures, [check out the full page on our website](#)



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# TIPS TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

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Mental health is incredibly important, especially at a time of year when the weather is colder and the days are shorter. And while the holidays provide good cheer for some, for others they are stressful or even a source of grief.

Because of that, it's important that you support your mental health in little ways. Some examples including:

- Asking for help
- Setting small, attainable goals
- Joining a support group
- Setting aside time to do activities you enjoy
- Nourish your body with healthy foods & safe, appropriate exercise.
- Create a schedule for yourself
- Engage in social activities (safely, following your area's COVID-19 recommendations).

[You can read more about these tips on our website.](#)

You can find more tips in our article '[A guide for mental health during COVID-19](#)'

## Check out our new at-home exercise videos

This year we launched some new step-by-step exercise videos that you can do at home. These videos include modifications, and are demonstrated by a clinical exercise physiologist.

[\*\*Watch the videos\*\*](#)



# MEET KIESZA

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## From our series *Brain Injury Across Canada*



In 2017, Canadian-born signer and performing artist KIESZA was in a car accident in Toronto that left her with a traumatic brain injury. She has been in recovery ever since, and working to create new music through her own record label. KIESZA spoke with Brain Injury Canada in 2019 about her injury, the obstacles she continues to overcome, and how she moves forward each day.

“Everyday my life was recovery.... It was painful; I was nauseous and dizzy all the time... I had trouble controlling my emotions. I had to work through a lot of fear. I was scared of lots of things. I was scared of washing the dishes!”

[Read KIESZA's story](#)

## Interested in Sharing Your Story?

Brain injury affects over 1.5 million Canadians. Our 'Brain Injury Across Canada' series brings comfort and connection to all our readers across the country.

If you'd like to share your story, please email

[info@braininjurycanada.ca](mailto:info@braininjurycanada.ca)

We will send you our submission rules and help make the process as accessible as possible.

# HOW TECHNOLOGY IS DRIVING THE FUTURE OF BRAIN HEALTH

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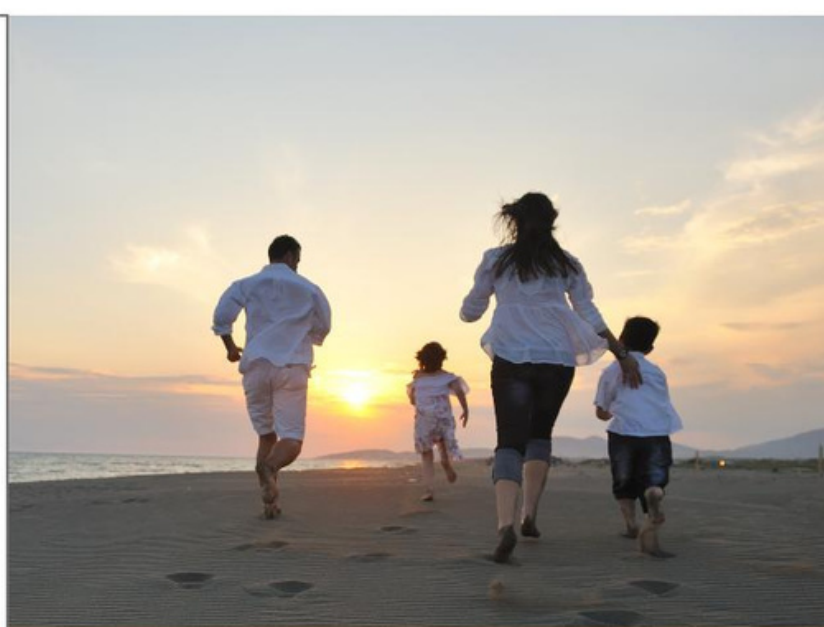


Lack of innovation in the field of brain injury assessment and treatment has led to few improvements over the last 20 years – but this appears to be changing. In a recent webinar on technology and brain health, Dr. Kyle Ruiter from VoxNeuro spoke with Dr. Michel Rathbone and Dr. Lauren Karatanevski to discuss some of the issues that exist in brain injury assessment, along with some new innovations that are changing that narrative.

Technologies that are used to look at brain injuries today, such as CT and MRI scans, are great tools for identifying physical changes to the brain, but they cannot provide information on how the brain is functioning. Meanwhile, the types of assessments that are performed today to find out how the brain works, such as neuropsychological assessments, can be influenced by the subjectivity of either the patient or health care provider. They are also both physically and mentally taxing for a person with a brain injury to take – particularly if they have to do them multiple times.

The missing link in brain injury assessment has been the lack of objectivity. There hasn't been a way to get both the subjective analysis from professionals, and the firm data to provide a full picture of how a person's brain is working. Using new technologies that measure how the brain functions instead of behaviour alone, practitioners can add that missing layer to provide a more complete picture of a person's brain health.

No two brain injuries are the same, so they can't be treated the same. An individualized approach to treatment allows practitioners to work to understand what is wrong and develop a tailored treatment plan. By performing assessments using new technologies both before and after treatments have been administered, practitioners can now objectively review whether those methods are working and decide whether a change of course is required based on its effectiveness. For people with brain injury, the result of using new innovative technologies is that it is now easier to find the right strategies for their treatment.



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# FIND YOUR BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION

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You can find more information about your local brain injury association at [braininjurycanada.ca/brain-injury-associations](http://braininjurycanada.ca/brain-injury-associations)

## Alberta

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- Southern Alberta Brain Injury Society
- Brain Care Centre
- Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured

## British Columbia

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- British Columbia Brain Injury Association
- Braintrust Canada
- Fraser Valley Brain Injury Association
- Comox Valley Head Injury Association
- Kamloops Brain Injury Association
- Nanaimo Brain Injury Association
- North Okanagan Shuswap Brain Injury Association
- Northern Brain Injury Association of BC
- Powell River Brain Injury Association
- Prince George Brain Injured Group Society
- South Okanagan Similkameen Brain Injury Society
- West Kootenay Brain Injury Association
- Vancouver Brain Injury Association
- Victoria Brain Injury Association

## Manitoba

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- Manitoba Brain Injury Association

## Newfoundland & Labrador

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- Newfoundland & Labrador Brain Injury Association
- Neuropsychiatric Patients' Association

## Nova Scotia

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- Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia

## Ontario

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- Ontario Brain Injury Association
- Brain Injury Association of Quinte District
- Brain Injury Association of Fort Erie
- New Beginnings - Chatham-Kent
- Brain Injury Association of Durham Region
- Hamilton Brain Injury Association
- Brain Injury Association of London and Region
- Brain Injury Association of Niagra
- Brain Injury Association of North Bay and Area
- Brain Injury Services of Northern Ontario
- Brain Injury Association of the Ottawa Valley
- Brain Injury Association of Peel Halton
- Brain Injury Association of Peterborough Region
- Brain Injury Association of Sarnia Lambton
- Brain Injury Association of Sault Ste Marie
- Seizure & Brain Injury Centre
- Brain Injury Association of Sudbury
- Brain Injury Association of Toronto
- Brain Injury Association of Waterloo/Wellington
- Brain Injury Association of Windsor Essex
- Brain Injury Association of York Region

## Prince Edward Island

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- Brain Injury Association of Prince Edward Island

# FIND YOUR BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION

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## Quebec

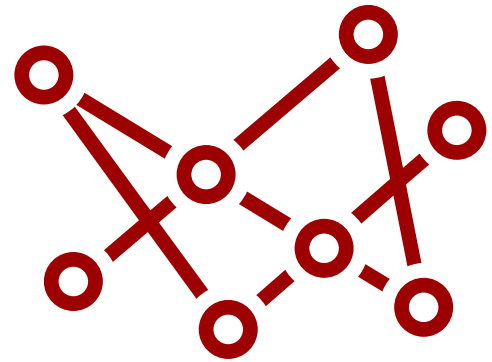
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- CONNEXION - Regroupement des Associations des Personnes TCC du Québec
- Association des personnes ACVA-TCC du Bas-Saint-Laurent
- Association des traumatisés crâniens de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue
- Association des handicapés adultes Côte-Nord
- Association des accidentés cérébro-vasculaires et traumatisés crâniens de l'Estrie
- Association des TCC et ACV de la Gaspésie et des Îles-de-la-Madeleine
- Association des personnes handicapées physiques et sensorielles du secteur Joliette
- Centre d'aide personnes traumatisées crâniennes et handicapées physiques Laurentides
- Association des traumatisés cranio-cérébraux Mauricie-Centre-du-Québec
- Association des Traumatisés cranio-cérébraux de la Montérégie
- Association québécoise des traumatisés crâniens
- Association des neurotraumatisés – Outaouais
- Association des TCC des deux rives
- Association Renaissance des personnes traumatisées crâniennes du Saguenay/Lac-Saint-Jean

### Visit **Brain Injury Canada Connect**

Find organizations and services you need in your area.

Check back often - new listings are being added all the time!



## Saskatchewan

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- Saskatchewan Brain Injury Association
- Lloydminster and Area Brain Injury Society

# STAY IN TOUCH

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**Have questions or ideas?**  
**Send them to us at**  
**[info@braininjurycanada.ca](mailto:info@braininjurycanada.ca)**

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