



# CONNECTIONS

## Brain Injury Canada's Newsletter

Hello and welcome to the first Connections of 2025! We are excited to be heading to your inbox once again. Spring is on the horizon, and with it a federal election. We've partnered with Elections Canada to create detailed resources to help you learn more about being involved as a voter and how you can be involved in working at a federal election.

Along with election information, we've got new e-courses; an article with tips for getting a good night's sleep; and more in this edition of our newsletter. Happy reading!

The Brain Injury Canada Team

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# A federal election is coming: Make sure you're registered to vote

We are expecting a federal election this spring. If you are a Canadian citizen 18 years of age and older, you may be eligible to cast your vote for your Member of Parliament. However, you first need to be registered to vote!

## 1. Check if you are registered

You may already be registered to vote. But if you have recently moved, never voted before, or just want to check, you can [view your voting status online at electionscanada.ca](https://electionscanada.ca). Following the step-by-step process and you will find out whether you're registered to vote at your current address.

## 2. Check the boxes on your tax forms

During tax season, Elections Canada partners with the Canada Revenue Agency to give Canadian citizens aged 18 years and older an easy way to add or update their information in the [National Register of Electors](#). All you have to do is check "Yes" to Elections Canada's questions on your tax form. This quick and simple step ensures that electors are registered and ready to vote in federal elections.

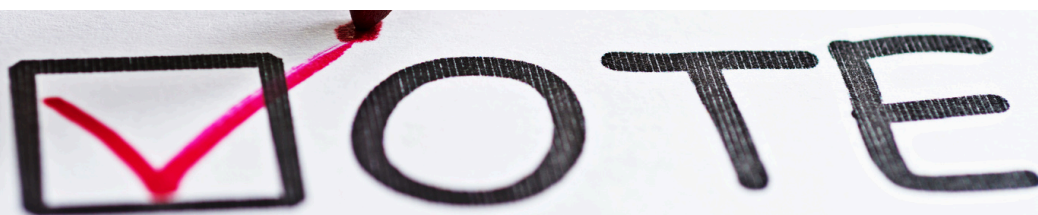
## 3. Register in advance at [electionscanada.ca](https://electionscanada.ca)

Along with checking your voter registration, [you can also go online and register to vote](#). You will need to follow the online process-step-by-step.

It is also possible to register by requesting a mailed application form or by visiting an Elections Canada office.

## Want to learn more about voting and the electoral process in Canada?

We have a whole section of our website dedicated to federal elections, plus NEW presentations on voting and working at a federal election developed with our partners at Elections Canada. [Visit our website to access these resources](#).



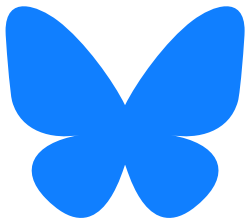


## Your story can make a difference

### Be a part of Stories of Brain Injury

People living with brain injury and their families are sharing their personal stories with Brain Injury Canada to help others learn; feel supported; and give them hope. Wherever you are in Canada, and wherever you are in your recovery journey, we want to hear your voice.

[Share my story today](#)



## We're on Bluesky!

### Connect with us on our newest social media channel

Brain Injury Canada is now on Bluesky! Join us on our brand new social media channel for updates, new resources, and more.

[Follow us on Bluesky](#)

## Visit Brain Injury and Teens (BRITE), our youth resource website



[britecanada.ca](https://britecanada.ca) is our new resource website specifically created for kids to take charge of their own learning when it comes to concussion, brain injury and recovery. This website is available in English and French, and is a growing resource that has new information being added regularly.

If you have children in your life with a brain injury, encourage them to check out [britecanada.ca](https://britecanada.ca) and/or share their story through our community page.

[Learn more](#)



## **NEW: Courses for community organizations**

### **Four courses to help organizations operate and support themselves and their communities**

We are pleased to share that we have launched four courses designed for organizations (or companies or individuals) that work with their communities. Framed through creating safe, accessible supports for individuals with brain injury, these courses cover a variety of topics designed to strengthen operations. These topics include:

- **Introduction to Ethics for Community Organizations:** This course is an introduction to ethics, establishing a code of ethics, and an exploration of best practices for operationalizing ethics at a community organization.
- **Introduction to Trauma-Informed Care for Community Organizations:** This course is an introduction to the principles of trauma-informed care; resources and tools to implement trauma-informed care; and person, cultural and disability-centred approaches to providing supports.
- **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility plus Belonging in Community Spaces:** This course provides practical information and recommendations for community organizations to create inclusive spaces for clients and staff. Topics include unconscious bias, allyship, overcoming barriers and actioning IDEA+B practices.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing for Community Workers:** This course is about mental health and supporting your wellbeing both as an individual and through an organization's practices. Topics include communication about mental health, psychological safety, and coping with compassion fatigue.

These courses are evidence-based, informed by lived experience, and feature a variety of reflection exercises, practical application scenarios and knowledge quizzes to support learning.

Each course is \$30 or **\$100 for all four when you purchase the Community Builders bundle.**

[Learn more about the Community Builders bundle and courses](#)

# Sleep is important for brain injury recovery: How do you get it?

\*This article was originally published on Health Insights, written by Brain Injury Canada in March 2025.

Everyone needs quality rest in order to feel their best. But for individuals with brain injury, it's common to experience lack of sleep and sleep disturbances that impact quality of life. It's "one of the most persistent and debilitating consequences of TBI [traumatic brain injury]" [1], and can have a huge impact on a person's ability to navigate day-to-day life and their recovery.

Think about how you feel when you don't get enough sleep: you may feel fatigued, unable to engage with what's going on around you, more moody (such as feeling anger or sadness), and just overall feel pretty bad. Someone with a brain injury may be coping with ongoing effects like headaches, memory loss and fatigue (and more) that are made worse by lack of sleep. Sleep is an important part of brain injury recovery and overall wellness because it directly contributes to how much energy we have each day. If you don't have as much fuel in the tank, you won't be able to do as much—or you may try to do too much and hit a metaphorical wall. This can be incredibly discouraging and frustrating, particularly for those adjusting to new things post-injury.

Have you heard of spoon theory? While not directly related to sleep, it is related to understanding how much energy someone has, how much they can give, and what happens when too much is spent. It was introduced to help people with chronic conditions illustrate their capacities day-to-day. [Watch this video on spoon theory from Paul.](#)



# Sleep is important for brain injury recovery: How do you get it?

Sleep helps replenish spoons and supports emotional, physical and mental wellbeing. That's why it's so important for brain health and brain injury recovery.

Let's dive into what can impact sleep and some tips for creating the best possible chance to get a good night's rest.

## How can brain injury affect someone's sleep?

There could be lots of different reasons someone may struggle to get a good night's sleep after a brain injury.

### Changes in breathing

The brain helps regulate breathing, and damage to the part that controls the breath can lead to challenges. In some cases, a person with affected breathing control may actually stop breathing for short periods of time. This is commonly called sleep apnea and can also cause snoring problems.

A common challenge faced by people with sleep apnea is that they don't know they have it. There are some signs you may notice yourself: you wake up choking, gasping, or with shortness of breath. Other signs such as snoring or stopping breathing are only noticed by others. Sleep apnea may also cause insomnia. If you or someone you share a sleeping space with have noticed these symptoms, you can speak with a doctor about being referred to a sleep specialist who can run more tests.

- [Information about sleep apnea](#)

### Chemical changes

Parts of the brain control chemical levels that contribute to sleep. For example, the pineal gland in the brain regulates melatonin, which plays a role in falling asleep [2]. When there is damage to these brain functions, a person may have trouble falling asleep or experiencing disrupted sleep patterns because the chemicals are no longer affecting the brain and body in the same way.

### Depression or anxiety

When a person is experiencing mental health struggles such as depression or anxiety, it can make it harder to fall and/or stay asleep. Unfortunately a lack of sleep can then contribute to depression and anxiety. For questions about mental health, you should speak directly to a doctor or medical professional.

# Sleep is important for brain injury recovery: How do you get it?

## Medications

Some medications have side effects that could include trouble falling asleep, staying awake, or drowsiness. Any side effects that may be stemming from medication should be shared with the medical team in charge of prescribing them. While they may not be able to eliminate the side effects, they will be able to explain what's happening and how to manage them.

## Pain and discomfort

Physical pain and uncomfortable positions may contribute to lack of sleep. If you can't get comfortable, you just won't be able to get to sleep as easily. While you may not be able to fully eliminate pain, you can try strategies like prescribed medication, special supportive mattresses and pillows, and other sleep aids depending on the type of pain.

## Sleep disorders and syndromes

Studies have shown that brain injury and sleep disorders go hand in hand. When looking at a successful sleep-wake cycle, a person gets uninterrupted rest at night and is awake during the day. Sleep disorders make it difficult to rest, and brain injury recovery can suffer as a result. It's difficult to recognize a sleep disorder or a related sleep problem because it can include resting too much as well as not resting enough.

Any sleep challenges should be shared with the medical team, who may be able to offer additional recommendations for treatment.

## Too much napping

A person coping with physical and cognitive changes after a brain injury may need to take more rest periods or naps. Part of a good sleep hygiene routine is listening to your body, and sometimes the body and brain do need a nap. But too much napping can make it difficult for a person to fall asleep at night, when they are supposed to be doing the bulk of their recharging for the next day. This leads to mixed up sleep patterns or poor sleep.

Naps should be limited during the day and should be kept short. An alternative to napping is practicing meditation. It allows you to take some time to rest, but keeps you awake [3].

Sleeping problems can become a cycle that can be difficult to break. But as sleep improves, so does brain injury recovery, and vice versa. The key is finding ways to understand your relationship with sleep and developing methods to support healthy sleeping patterns.

# Sleep is important for brain injury recovery: How do you get it?

## First: figure out what your sleep is like and what could be impacting it

In order to prioritize better, more restful sleep, it's helpful to understand what could be affecting sleep in the first place. A great way to do this is to keep a sleep journal. This can not only help identify potential sleep problems, but it can be shared with the medical team.

- [Download a sleep journal](#)

You can also keep track of sleep through technology specifically designed to help monitor sleep. For example, some fitness trackers have sleep functions. They are designed to be as easy on your eyes and brain as possible (little-to-no blue light) and can tell you important information about periods of sleep, if you were restless, and if you woke up. Some even monitor heart rate!

## Tips to help get a good night's sleep

There's no tried and true method to get a perfect night's sleep every time. But there are lots of things people with brain injury (and anyone else struggling to sleep) can try.

### **Avoid stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine**

Stimulants like caffeine and nicotine can keep you awake and alert, and when taken before bed, they make the natural chemicals your brain releases much less effective.

### **Create a bedtime routine and good sleep environment**

Creating a consistent and relaxing bedtime routine is an important part of proper sleep hygiene. It's also good for your mental health to engage in relaxing, self-care focused activities. This includes:

- Bathing 2-3 hours before bed, or at least thoroughly washing your face
- Engaging in proper dental hygiene
- Keep a paper and pencil by your bed so you can write down everything that is on your mind. By writing it down, you have the freedom to let it go from your mind and don't have to worry about forgetting it
- Meditation
- Only getting into bed at bedtime
- Using earplugs if your home is noisy
- Using a supportive mattress or pillow



# Sleep is important for brain injury recovery: How do you get it?

- Making sure your bed is big enough and you have plenty of space if you are sleeping with a partner
- Using an eye mask if you need a little extra help blocking out light

You can set reminders on your phone or computer to put technology away, start getting ready for bed, or anything else you have scheduled into your bedtime routine. It may be hard to stick to a routine if you're not used to it, but over time it can help signal your brain and body that it's time to sleep.

## **Don't exercise right before bed**

While exercise is a good and important part of overall wellness, doing it right before bed might impact quality of sleep. This is because adrenaline, heart rate and temperature are elevated. Try wrapping up any exercising earlier in the day. Every person is different so it will take some time to figure out your best time.

## **Get outdoors when you can**

Outdoor activities, fresh air and natural light are commonly known to support health and wellbeing, including sleep.

## **Keep your room cool and dark**

It is recommended that bedrooms be kept cool and dark during sleep because temperature and light play a role in sleep. Ways to help create the right sleeping atmosphere include investing in blackout blinds, removing unnecessary technology from the room, and opening a window, using a fan or using a portable air conditioner if the room is too warm.

## **Medication**

There is medication available to help with sleep, but this should only be taken at the recommendation of a physician. First speak with your doctor about whether a sleep-aid medication is a safe, appropriate choice.

## **Set a regular bedtime and wake up time**

Going to bed and waking up at the same time as consistently as possible helps the body and brain realize it's time for bed.

# Sleep is important for brain injury recovery: How do you get it?

## Stop screen time a couple hours before bed

Technology has become an important part of daily life, and while you don't have to give up screens, they shouldn't be used before bedtime. Your body responds to screens and the artificial blue light they create by suppressing natural functions designed to help you sleep. You should stop using screens and technology at least a couple of hours before bed. The earlier you stop, the easier it will be for your body's natural sleep functions to kick in.

## Use the bedroom only for sleep

Over time, bedrooms can become multi-purpose rooms where people read, watch television, go on their phones, or work. But when a person is experiencing sleep problems, a big part of practicing proper sleep hygiene is to use the bedroom only for sleep and intimacy. Remove all distractions from your bedroom, such as phones, laptops and televisions.

Sleep is an important part of brain injury recovery and overall brain health. Wherever you are in your journey, make sure to prioritize a good night's rest whenever you can.

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[1] Kalantari, N., & Gosselin, N. (2025). Sleep and circadian rhythms after traumatic brain injury. *Handbook of clinical neurology*, 206, 125–140. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-323-90918-1.00004-6>

[2] [Healthlink BC](#)

[3] Information for this section sourced in part from [msktc.org](#)

## Find your local brain injury association

Provincial and local brain injury associations are available across Canada and are ready to provide support, information, education, advocacy, and a variety of programs and services.

[What's my local association?](#)



# Do you have opinions on emergency alerts?

## Neil Squire is asking for your participation

The Neil Squire Society is looking for Canadians with disabilities to participate in a focus group to help improve how we send and receive emergency alerts. These are the alerts you get on your phone, radio, or TV, like when there is a weather warning. They want to learn about your experience with these alerts, like how easy or hard they are to understand and use.

They already did a survey, and now they want to talk more in-depth to people in focus groups. By joining, you can share your thoughts and help make emergency alerts better for everyone.

### Who Can Join?

You can join if:

- You live in Canada
- You are 18 or older
- You have a disability

Before you join, you will need to answer some questions in a short pre-screen questionnaire. This helps them know if the focus group is a good fit for you. Your answers will be kept private.

You can fill out the questionnaire online at [https://www.ns-access.com/survey\\_bic/](https://www.ns-access.com/survey_bic/) . You can also email a Neil Squire researcher at [rd.info@neilsquire.ca](mailto:rd.info@neilsquire.ca) to arrange a questionnaire over the phone.

If selected, you will be paid \$100 for your time.

[Fill out the pre-screening survey to see if I qualify.](https://www.ns-access.com/survey_bic/)

## Classify Moderate to Severe Brain Injury as a Chronic Condition

A significant collaboration between Brain Injury Canada and the Canadian Traumatic Brain Injury Research Consortium (CTRC) is calling for moderate to severe Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to be officially classified as a chronic condition in Canada. This move would significantly enhance nationwide healthcare strategies, policies, and patient outcomes.

[Read the position paper](#)

## **Dana's story: "If I could go back and tell myself one thing when I first acquired my brain injury, it would be to not feel guilty for resting"**



In 2013, I had my first intracerebral brain hemorrhage in my left thalamus due to a cavernous angioma or cavernous malformation (CVM). The neurosurgeon was hesitant to operate—as he put it, the CVM was in a “high real estate” area of the brain. Although my brain hemorrhage stopped on its own, I continued to have bleeds. In 2016, I had my second, major hemorrhage and my neurosurgeon and I decided it was time to go in. In January of 2017, I had a craniotomy with a resection of the CVM.

Countless professionals have helped me get to where I am today: physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, counsellors, neurosurgeon, neuropsychiatrist, neurophysiologist, friends and family. I feel fortunate that I already had a background and training in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). The ability to find calm and meditate during the long hospital stays was very valuable.

If I could go back and tell myself one thing when I first acquired my brain injury, it would be to not feel guilty for resting. Of course, there were many times that rest was all I could do; however, when I did have some energy, I'd often over-do it. As a mother, teacher, coach, and athlete, I often felt that I wasn't pulling my weight or maximizing the hours in my day. This mindset led to a lot of setbacks.

As someone with an invisible disability, I feel I am not always taken seriously about my deficits. It is also terribly hard to explain fluctuations in my abilities—one day I may sound articulate, and the next day I am searching for words and having a difficult time conversing. One day, I may be able to do a 5km hike, and the next day I'll have a migraine and be in bed. Don't stop inviting out a brain injured friend or family member. They may say “no” 100 times for every “yes”, but knowing you think of them is so important!

Finally, if a brain injured person has the opportunity to go through grief counselling, I would highly recommend it. I am no longer a teacher, coach, and athlete—going through the grief cycle helped me deal with this tremendous shift in my life. Developing a new identity, so-to-speak, is equally challenging, but less somber (in my opinion).

Love and Light to All!

## Sneak peek of what's coming this spring and summer

### New resources, Brain Injury Awareness Month and more!

We have a lot of great things happening this spring, summer and beyond. Here's a sneak peek:

- **Brain Injury and Long-Term Care:** A brand new e-course specifically for professionals who work in long-term care homes, giving them the foundations of brain injury and how to provide support for those individuals who may be transitioning into a home; coping with aging; and more.
- **Symptom management resources:** We are working with members of our community to build resources on symptom management, informed by evidence and lived experience.
- **Brain Injury Awareness Month:** Watch our social media channels for updates and announcements ahead of June 2025.

### Free E-Courses for Family Caregivers

Sign up for our free self-guided e-courses for family caregivers all about brain injury, caregiving, and more

Sign up today




### Brain Injury Canada Connect

Find services for individuals with brain injury & caregivers across Canada through our interactive service directory. And if you provide supports, list with us today!

Access the service directory



**You might also be interested in...**

-  [Educational infographics on brain injury, concussion and more](#)
-  [Make a donation to Brain Injury Canada](#)
-  [Health care professionals can sign up for our Foundations educational e-course for just \\$65+HST](#)

**Follow us on our social media channels**



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[It was okay](#) 😐

[No](#) 😞

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