

# Brain injury and aggressive behaviors

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## What can I expect?

Your child may show aggressive or inappropriate behavior after a brain injury. This may affect how your child relates to friends and family.

Your child may do 1 or more of these:

- Act out in ways they never did before they were injured
- Say things they do not mean
- Talk or move without thinking first
- Be extra emotional
- Be physically or verbally aggressive (in their actions or words)
- Say or do things that are sexual in nature
- Have trouble following directions
- Have trouble understanding personal boundaries and personal space

## What can I do to help my child?

- Talk with your child's doctor, nurse, therapist, social worker or psychologist about your concerns.
- Stay calm. Ignore inappropriate behaviors.
- Be active with your child's team to create a plan to improve these behaviors.
- Know that your child may not be able to control their behavior.
- Watch for triggers that seem to cause behavior changes. This may include:
  - Being around too much noise.
  - Being tired.
  - Having too many people around them.
- Share any triggers with your child's team.
- Find rewards that will help encourage positive behavior. This may include:
  - Playing a favorite game.
  - Reading a story.
  - Doing an arts and crafts project.
- Be consistent in how you talk with your child – both with your words and your actions.
- Remember that it is the *behavior* that is not appropriate – it is not your child.
- Be patient. This often does not last long, and your child will keep getting better.

## Where can I learn more?

For more details, you may visit these websites:

- Children's Healthcare of Atlanta – [choa.org/medical-services/rehabilitation](https://choa.org/medical-services/rehabilitation)
- Brain Injury Association of America – [biausa.org](https://biausa.org)

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

## Brain injury and aggressive behaviors, continued

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- Center for Parent Information and Resources – [parentcenterhub.org](https://parentcenterhub.org)
- Parent to Parent USA – [p2pusa.org](https://p2pusa.org)
- National Institute of Neurologic Disorders and Stroke, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) – [ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders/traumatic-brain-injury-tbi](https://ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders/traumatic-brain-injury-tbi)

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**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

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