

# Brain injury and aggressive behaviors

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## What can I expect?

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

Your child may do one 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, and 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.
- 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/Childrens-Hospital-Services/Rehabilitation/Resources-and-Family-Support-Services](https://choa.org/Childrens-Hospital-Services/Rehabilitation/Resources-and-Family-Support-Services)

**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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- Brain Injury Association of America – [biausa.org/index.htm](https://biausa.org/index.htm)
- National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities – [nichcy.org/disability/specific/tbi](https://nichcy.org/disability/specific/tbi)

*Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta has not reviewed all of the sites listed as resources and does not make any representations regarding their content or accuracy. Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta does not recommend or endorse any particular products, services or the content or use of any third party websites, or make any determination that such products, services or websites are necessary or appropriate for you or for the use in rendering care to patients. Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta is not responsible for the content of any of the above-referenced sites or any sites linked to these Sites. Use of the links provided on this or other sites is at your sole risk.*

**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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