



# FACT SHEET

## *Brain Injury & Attention/Concentration*

*Do you  
have  
trouble  
with  
attention  
or  
focus  
since  
your  
brain  
injury?*

### What does this mean?

Attention is a vital part of our everyday functioning. All of us, from time to time, become distracted, whether it is a phone call in the middle of cooking dinner or being interrupted during a meeting. When a person sustains a brain injury, the following types of attention may be affected:

- ◆ **Focused Attention:** The ability to attend to an activity or task with no other distractions. For example, a person might do a crossword puzzle in silence.
- ◆ **Selective Attention:** The ability to attend to a task and block out unimportant information. For example, reading a book while background music plays.
- ◆ **Alternating Attention:** The ability to switch between tasks. This is especially common in real-life situations. For example, working in an office and being interrupted by answering phone calls, filing and greeting clients.
- ◆ **Divided Attention:** The ability to do two or more tasks at the same time. One of the most common examples is driving a car while changing radio stations and looking for an unfamiliar exit.

### How might a brain injury affect attention / concentration?

A person with a brain injury may be unable to focus, pay attention, or multi-task. Since attention skills are considered a “building block” of higher level skills (such as memory and reasoning), people with attention or concentration problems often show signs of other cognitive problems as well.

### Common examples of attention/concentration difficulties:

- ◆ Restlessness and being easily distracted.
- ◆ Difficulty finishing a project or working on more than one task at a time.
- ◆ Problems carrying on long conversations or sitting still for long periods of time.

### Recommended strategies:

- ◆ Decrease the distractions. For example, work in a quiet room.
- ◆ Focus on one task at a time. Take breaks when you get tired.
- ◆ Begin practicing attention skills on simple, yet practical activities (such as reading a paragraph) in a quiet room. Gradually make the tasks harder (read a short story) or work in a more noisy environment.
- ◆ Ask the speaker to slow down or repeat what they have said.