

Encephalitis Fact File – information for journalists

Encephalitis is inflammation of the brain tissue. It can occur at any age, in any part of the world and is caused either by infection, usually viral, or by autoimmune diseases. Subsequently many survivors are left with an acquired brain injury, the degree and severity of which will vary. Encephalitis is indiscriminate, showing no respect for age, gender, ethnic origin or other demographics.

Encephalitis can develop quickly and cause serious problems to the nervous system and the brain. It often begins with a 'flu-like illness or with headache. Symptoms indicating that this is a more serious illness follow later and typically include "lowered consciousness".

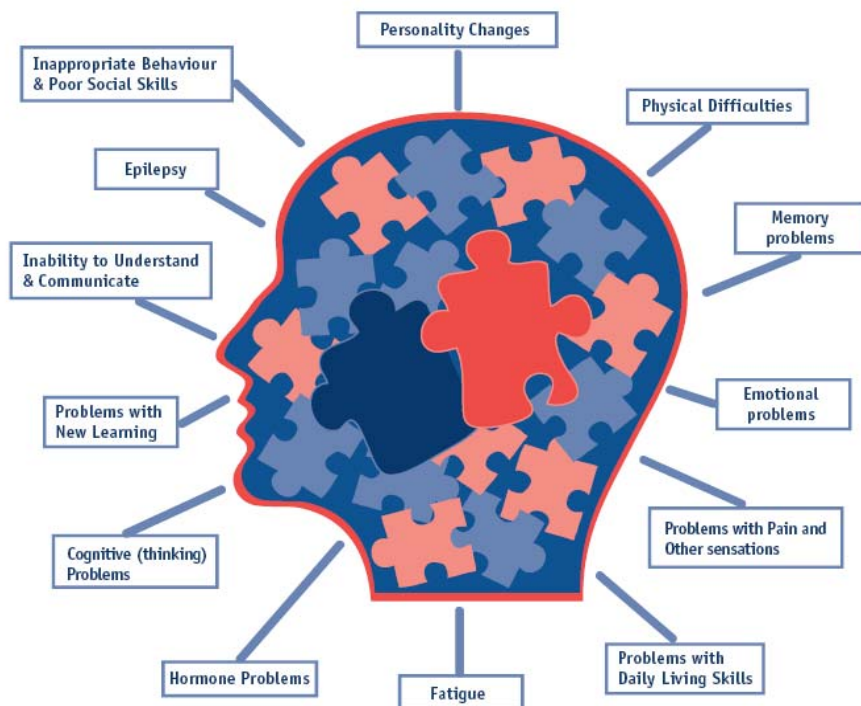
Although common viruses, directly infecting the brain, are the major cause of encephalitis (Infectious Encephalitis), the body's reaction to infection itself can also, rarely, lead to encephalitis. This can happen if your immune system produces antibodies to a virus, which by mistake, attack the nerves in the brain at the same time. This condition is called Post Infectious or Autoimmune Encephalitis.

There are no statistics for the UK, however we estimate approx. 4,000 people per year are newly affected. Mortality is high, however, again statistics are lacking. Mortality resulting from infection by the Herpes virus (which accounts for approx 30% of identified cases in the UK) is 20-30% with treatment. Left untreated the mortality rate is 70-80%.

In 60% of cases the causative infection is never found.

Problems caused by Encephalitis

Recovery following encephalitis is very varied. Outcomes vary between those who are able to return to their former work and lifestyle (with perhaps only a slight change in their abilities) to those left profoundly disabled, physically, cognitively or both. A small percentage of those affected by encephalitis will need to remain in residential care for the rest of their lives.



The Encephalitis Society

The Society was established in 1994. The Society serves the whole of the UK and the Republic of Ireland; and provides support and information to children and adults affected by encephalitis, their families, their carers and those professionals supporting them. The Society is the only resource of its kind in the world.

Please note we are supported by a full clinical panel and can access them for quotes and other guidance in order to support you.

If you would like further information, please contact:

Ava Easton

Tel: +44 (0)1653 692583

Email: ava@encephalitis.info Web Site: www.encephalitis.info

© The Encephalitis Society