

## **Social consequences of encephalitis**

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Following encephalitis, people often experience changes in their thinking, behaviour and feelings. These changes may make it difficult to take part in everyday activities such as work, driving, running a household or making plans with friends or family.

### **Inability to drive**

Driving involves many more complex skills than simply the mechanical ability to drive a vehicle. Concentration difficulties, memory problems, difficulties in learning, a slowed response to situations and emotional problems are all common after encephalitis and may affect the ability to drive. In some cases, more obvious physical or visual impairments or seizures may pose significant difficulties for those who want to return to driving.

### **Inability/difficulty to return to work**

Following encephalitis some people find they can return to their occupation with little or no adjustment. However, for others, returning to work is a major challenge and sometimes impossible. It can be hampered by many things, such as memory problems, tiredness, mood swings, behavioural constraints, reduced organisational skills, finances, personal or family worries and stress, prejudices of potential employers etc.

### **Financial difficulties**

Being in hospital, caring for or visiting somebody in hospital, not being able to go back to work and insurance problems may impact on people's finances. This can add at the stress brought up already by the illness and its consequences.

### **Altered family relationships**

Encephalitis can have an impact on family relationships. All families are different, but no matter how well a family is functioning, there may be major challenges ahead. Initially there is relief that a loved one has survived the illness but the person themselves may have little or no recollection of the illness. This can bring up a conflict of feelings with relief and joy on one side, and confusion, even anger, on the other, as the person affected finds that they are less able to function as they once did.

When encephalitis affects a family, their coping strategies will be tested. Spouses may feel isolated and trapped as roles are reversed and relationships put under strain. Children may also experience emotional problems and sometimes their needs can be overlooked. Extended family and friends often want to help but don't know how to offer that help. Accepting the situation and the help available is not always easy.

Not all families have good relationships and sometimes the sudden impact of encephalitis can add to already strained relationships. Typically, families will go through a process of coming to terms with the consequences of the illness then finding ways of coping.

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### **Support our information**

With our support, no one has to face encephalitis alone. Our advice and information are available free of charge to everyone affected but we are truly grateful when supporters feel able to contribute a little to the cost of these resources. Please donate today by visiting [www.encephalitis.info/donate](http://www.encephalitis.info/donate) or text the word DOCTOR to 70085 to donate £5.

**Thank you!**

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