

Reducing Brain Over-stimulation

Over-stimulation

To help your loved one recover from a brain injury, it's important to help them not get over-stimulated.

Their brain is unable to make sense of all of the information coming in such as sounds, lights, touches and smells.

In the early stages of rehabilitation, it is important to provide an environment that reduces brain over-stimulation so they can participate in rehab.

Members of the health care team will work to keep your loved one on a regular schedule and plan their care in a quiet, dimly lit environment. Without this, your loved one may become overwhelmed and more confused. They may withdraw and shut down or even become aggressive.

The amount of stimulation your loved one receives will increase as they improve.

Signs to Watch for

Signs your loved one may be over-stimulated:

- being restless or trying to move around
- repeating the same words or sounds
- having a lack of attention
- being easily distracted
- being confused, irritated or being verbally aggressive
- being physically aggressive
- not wanting to be touched or withdrawing from interactions with staff or visitors.

Tell a member of the health care team if you think your loved one is over-stimulated.

How To Help Your Loved One

- Limit visitors to no more than 2 at a time.
- Limit visits to 10 to 15 minutes, unless you are just sitting with your loved one and not talking or doing an activity.
- Keep your conversations brief and clear. Give just one piece of information at a time.
- Do not use your phone when your loved one is in the room. If you need to use your phone, go into the hallway.
- If the room phone keeps ringing, talk with a nurse about options.
- Keep the television, music and computer off unless you know your loved one enjoys it. Limit screen and music time to no more than 20 minutes.
- You may put up a few family photos in your loved one's room. Limit cards, balloons and flowers. Consider putting photos and cards in a small album.
- Remove clutter in your loved one's room.
- Speak slowly with a calm, quiet voice. Give your loved one time to respond.
- Check with staff before giving your loved one anything to eat or drink.
- Share these tips with others who visit.

Talk with any member of your loved one's health care team if you have any questions or concerns.

(over)

Environmental Management System

Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute uses a system of communication that identifies how the environment should be managed for each person based on where they are in the rehabilitation process. This is called the environmental management system (EMS).

The system is based on a traffic light:

- red light: full restrictions
- yellow light: some restrictions
- green light: limited or no restrictions.

The level may change based on your loved one's needs and health care team's advice.

	Red Light	Yellow Light	Green Light
Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ dim/dark at night ■ natural light during the day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ as they can tolerate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ no restrictions
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ completely quiet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ avoid loud, annoying, or ongoing noises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ no restrictions
Room décor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ none or very limited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a small amount is OK ■ avoid violent or sexual content ■ avoid busy or active posters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ no restrictions
TV, video, music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ none 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ no more than 20 minutes at a time (not during scheduled rest breaks) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ no restrictions
Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ family only ■ 1 visitor at a time ■ limit visit to 10 minutes or less 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ family, close friends, and clergy ■ no more than 1 or 2 visitors at a time ■ limit visits to 15 minutes or less 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ no restrictions ■ must follow the hospital visitation policy
Touch, handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ limit touch and handling except as absolutely needed for medical care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ as they can tolerate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ no restrictions
Treatment location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ in the room or in a private treatment area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ in a private or semi-private treatment area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ anywhere
Notes	These help prevent agitation later, help your loved one tolerate and benefit from rehabilitation therapies and keep your loved one safe and comfortable.	Red light restrictions will be used at the first sign(s) of agitation or withdrawal.	These provide cues to help your loved one recognize symptoms of overload, understand what adds to it and understand how to reduce stimulation.