

Transfer Trauma when Moving to a Facility

What is transfer trauma?

Transfer trauma is a physical, behavioural, and emotional reaction to a sudden change in a person's surroundings. This can happen with a move from a hospital to a care facility, from a care facility to a hospital, or even from one room to another.

Transfer trauma can happen with the loss of familiar surroundings, people, and routines. Moves that are sudden tend to be the hardest. People with cognitive impairment are affected more than others.

What are the signs and symptoms of transfer trauma?

Signs and symptoms may be easy or hard to notice. These include:

- withdrawal from others
- feelings of having been treated unfairly (resentment)
- anxiety
- sadness
- loss of hope (despair)
- stress
- loss of appetite
- feeling uncertain (insecurity)
- confusion
- changes to sleep
- anger
- frustration
- worsening health

Helping someone to adjust when moving to a facility?

It is normal for people to worry about important changes.

- Think about what has helped coping with change in the past.
- Encourage participating in enjoyable activities such as reading, listening to music, knitting, or doing puzzles.
- Have family or friends drop off personal items or things that are comforting.
- Ask if the room or belongings can be rearranged to help the person feel more comfortable.
- Let the care team know preferences such as likes and dislikes and when to provide care.
- Follow a routine and let staff know what the routine is so they can best support.
- Ask to talk to the case manager or healthcare worker to answer any questions or address any concerns.
- Have virtual visits. To find out how, go to: www.ahs.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-connecting-with-tech.pdf.
- Record video or audio messages, send notes and cards.
- Offer any information to the care team that will help them to support care needs. Report any changes or concerns to the care team.
- Share information with the care team (such as health information, usual mood or behaviour) so they can watch for changes.
- Make sure to have up-to-date prescription glasses and working hearing aids.

Detailed care planning is an important aspect of reducing the impact of transfer trauma.

- Go over the care plan with the care team and ask for a copy.