



CANADIAN STROKE BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Vascular Cognitive Impairment Seventh Edition, 2024

Appendix 3: Signs and Symptoms of Vascular Cognitive Impairment

*Swartz R.H, Longman S (Writing Group Chairs)
on behalf of the Canadian Stroke Best Practice Recommendations
Vascular Cognitive Impairment Writing Group, the Canadian Stroke Best Practice
Recommendations Advisory Committee, and in collaboration with the
Canadian Stroke Consortium and CanStroke Recovery Clinical Trials Platform.*

© 2024 Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

Appendix 3: Signs and Symptoms of Vascular Cognitive Impairment

	Examples of PWLE & Family reported signs and symptoms	Examples of clinical interview, clinical observations, or findings on clinical examination	Experiences reflected in VCI Journey Map
Executive Function	<p>Difficulties figuring out new strategies</p> <p>Poor monitoring of the environment for safety</p> <p>Unsafe driving</p> <p>Difficulty with multitasking</p> <p>Disliking busy, crowded, or distracting environments</p> <p>Changes in ability to manage bill payments, finances, medications, appointments, scheduling, and/or social plans</p> <p>Needing new strategies to manage daily activities or hide challenges</p> <p>Partner/spouse/child/carer needing to provide more support</p> <p>Loses train of thought easily</p> <p>Misplaces / loses objects & may think they have been stolen</p> <p>Problems with decision-making and learning from feedback</p> <p>Making poor decisions</p> <p>Struggling with job performance</p> <p>Impaired social cognition: interpreting social contexts, emotion recognition, empathy</p>	<p>Impairments in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○sustaining attention ○speed of information processing ○forming verbal &/or nonverbal concepts ○verbal &/or nonverbal reasoning ○recognizing own impairments <p>Reduced cognitive flexibility (set shifting)</p> <p>Perseverations in conversation or on tasks</p> <p>Impaired response control</p> <p>Increased susceptibility to delirium</p> <p>Decline in ability to analyze a situation, develop an effective plan, and communicate that plan to others</p> <p>Problems with executive tasks on exam (e.g., serial 7's, go, no-go) or bedside screening (e.g., clock drawing, Trails B)</p> <p>Does not initiate tasks, conversations</p> <p>Poor judgement, does not appreciate consequences of poor decisions</p>	<p>Changes misattributed to lifestyle stress, hearing loss, age</p> <p>Challenges participating in daily activities & roles in the community</p> <p>Develop / use strategies to manage daily activities</p> <p>Hide challenges by developing compensatory strategies</p> <p>Accommodations for return to work</p> <p>Grieve losses</p> <p>Uncertainty</p> <p>Discuss plan for future</p>
Memory	<p>Unusual difficulties recalling names or finding words</p> <p>Repeating questions or stories</p> <p>Forgetting appointments, medications</p>	<p>Difficulties remembering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○new information ○recent activities ○to turn off the stove ○to turn off the tap ○to take medications ○to pay bills 	<p>Changes misattributed to lifestyle stress, hearing loss, age</p>

	<p>Needing to use new strategies to manage daily activities</p> <p>Loses train of thought easily</p> <p>Partner/spouse/child/carer needing to provide more support</p> <p>Misplaces / loses objects and may think they have been stolen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ how to get to familiar places <p>Impairments in learning & retrieval of information (verbal/non-verbal)</p> <p>Poor 3- or 5-word recall</p>	
Other Focal	<p>Speech problems</p> <p>New difficulties with math</p> <p>New problems following routes, getting to places</p> <p>Difficulty understanding left vs. right</p> <p>Getting lost</p> <p>Problems using objects or tools like phones, toothbrushes</p>	<p>Impairments in word finding or naming</p> <p>Acalculia</p> <p>Extinction, neglect</p> <p>Visuospatial challenges</p> <p>Left-right confusion</p> <p>Apraxia</p>	<p>Cognitive difficulties not recognized by individual, partner, family &/or health care providers</p> <p>Develop & use strategies to manage daily activities</p> <p>Living accommodation</p> <p>Limited access to health care providers / services</p> <p>Changes to roles & relationships as family assists</p> <p>Uncertainty</p> <p>Impact on identity & self-determination</p>
Global/Functional	<p>Challenges participating in daily activities & roles in the community</p> <p>Changes misattributed to lifestyle stress, hearing loss, age</p> <p>Family members and caregivers needing to provide more support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ easily distracted ○ can only focus on one thing at a time ○ tires easily on tasks requiring cognitive effort ○ does not take initiative ○ slow to think / speak ○ irritable, 'short fuse' ○ repetitive <p>Disagrees with others about what can do independently or safely</p> <p>Would the individual with VCI or their family or caregivers feel comfortable letting the individual; with VCI drive a young child or loved one by themselves?</p>	<p>Changes to roles & relationships as family assists</p> <p>Impact on identity & self-determination</p> <p>Impact on capacity to give consent or exercise own authority</p> <p>Uncertainty</p> <p>Diagnosis may/may not occur</p> <p>Accommodations for return to work</p> <p>Grieve losses</p> <p>Impact on identity & self-determination</p> <p>Uncertainty</p> <p>Discuss plan for future</p>