



# on the brain blog

ASLS Brain Injury Program Newsletter

## Salmon Pasta Salad Photography by Matthew Kimura

- ◆ 4cups (1 L) (1 L) small pasta shells
- ◆ 1 cup frozen peas 1 1cup cup(250 mL) (250 mL) frozen peas
- ◆ 1 can (7.5 oz/213 g) drained sockeye salmon 1 1can (7.5 oz/213 g) can (7.5 oz/213 g) drained sockeye salmon
- ◆ 1/2 cup plain low-fat yogurt 1/2 1/2cup cup(125 mL) (125 mL) plain low-fat yogurt
- ◆ 1/3 cup finely diced red onion 1/3 1/3cup cup(75 mL) (75 mL) finely diced red onion
- ◆ 1/4 cup light mayonnaise 1/4 1/4cup cup(50 mL) (50 mL) light mayonnaise
- ◆ 6 radishes , thinly sliced6 6radishradishes, thinly sliced
- ◆ 2 tbsp chopped fresh dill , (or 2 tsp/10 mL dried dillweed)2 2tbsp tbsp(25 mL) (25 mL) chopped fresh dill, (or 2 tsp/10 mL dried dillweed)
- ◆ 1/2 tsp hot pepper sauce 1/2 1/2tsp tsp(2 mL) (2 mL) hot pepper sauce
- ◆ 1/2 tsp each of salt and pepper 1/2 1/2tsp tsp(2 mL) (2 mL) each of salt and pepper
- ◆ 12 leaves romaine lettuce 12 12leaves leavesromaine lettuce



### Preparation

In large saucepan of boiling salted water, cook pasta for 7 minutes. Add peas; cook until pasta is tender but firm, about 1 minute. Drain and rinse under cold water; shake out excess water. Meanwhile, in small bowl, flake salmon with fork, mashing in any bones; remove skin if desired. Set aside. In large bowl, stir together yogurt, onion, mayonnaise, radishes, dill, salt, pepper and hot pepper sauce. Tear 4 of the lettuce leaves into bite-size pieces; add to large bowl along with pasta mixture and salmon and toss to combine. To serve, spoon onto remaining lettuce leaves.

### Variations:

**Tuna Pasta Salad:** Replace salmon and peas with tuna & frozen cut green beans.

**Crab Pasta Salad:** Replace salmon and peas with crabmeat & frozen broccoli .

**Source :** Canadian Living Magazine: May 2003 or [www.canadianliving.com](http://www.canadianliving.com)

## Looking for More Ways to Save? RDSP it!

It can be very difficult to save money on a low or limited monthly income. It may seem as though most of your income goes to paying bills and there is little or no spare money to save. There are many people who are unaware of the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) and the benefits that come with it. You may be interested to know that children and adults that are eligible for the Disability Tax Credit can qualify for an RDSP. The RDSP is a long-term savings plan for Canadians with disabilities. Once you open an RDSP the Government of Canada can deposit up to \$1,000 per year into your RDSP, even if you are not able to make a contribution. If you are able to make a contribution throughout the year, the Government of Canada can match your contribution dollar for dollar up to an additional \$3,500.



Mailing Label

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People with Acquired Brain Injury and co-existing mental health conditions are **UNDER-SERVED**

A brain injury can happen to anyone, anywhere, anytime. It could be due to an auto accident, sports injury, stroke, tumours, infections, falls, or one of countless other causes. Chances are you, or someone you know, has been affected by a Brain Injury.



By HikingArtist.com

## Filling and Connecting the Gaps

The Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation systems analysis states that services for people with Acquired Brain Injury can be improved by:

- ◆ Providing a more stable and cared for population to reduce the burden on the health care system and the government.
- ◆ increasing the quality of life of survivors and their families instead of investing in crisis management
- ◆ Creating better support for clients in the community
- ◆ Establishing greater coordination between different service agencies.
- ◆ Creating coordinated care for people with concurrent mental health issues.
- ◆ Ensuring increased and structured collaboration between health care Professionals.

It is extremely difficult to comprehend what life with a brain injury will be like during the chaotic and confusing days, weeks, or months in the ER, hospital, or in-patient rehabilitation after a brain injury accident. Yet once the medical professionals have finished their lifesaving work, survivors and their families are usually left to cope on their own with the life-changing and often lifelong behavioural, emotional, physical, and social effects of the injury. This is where most survivors and their families face challenges due to the fact that there are not enough community programs to support these survivors after their discharge from hospital.

According to a report analysis by the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation, people with Acquired Brain Injury and co-existing Mental Health Conditions are under-served. This population lack coordinated care and comprehensive treatment plans, therefore, their needs continue to go unmet. These gaps in service increases their chances of:

- going into crisis,
- having frequent emergency room visits,
- becoming homeless and being imprisoned,
- frequent trips to larger cities for treatments,
- losing functional abilities acquired in the hospital and rehab, and
- becoming isolated due to insufficient social and community supports

*Lack of coordinated follow up after discharge results in a loss of functional abilities for survivors upon return to the community. In some regions of this province, a Brain Injury disqualifies a person from accessing some mental health services.*



# CAREGIVER THOUGHTS



Life is beautiful: a young girl of 18, full of hopes and dreams with a beautiful future; then it happens...

My daughter Marie was riding her horse to practice barrel racing for the upcoming challenge in Grande Prairie. Marie had entered her first competition as a pro barrel racer. May 19, 2008 is the day that everything came tumbling down. While practising her pattern, her horse slipped on the newly worked area and fell forward, caught herself and bolted back on her feet. This forward and back motion caused a whiplash action and suddenly Marie had a traumatic closed head, brain injury. When she rode her horse up after the slip the action of her head moving forward and then back caused a bleed on her brain stem.

Marie was flown from Dixonville to Grande Prairie and then on to Edmonton. She spent 21 days in Intensive Care in Edmonton. After ICU we knew Marie's life was not in immediate danger but her quality of life definitely was. We were flown back to Grande Prairie where Marie remained in a coma. Her coma lasted 3 months. I visited her everyday. I vowed to her that I would not return home until such time that she could come with me. Everyday was a day of intense stress as I kept trying to remain positive that she would finally wake up. Her doctor kept trying to convince me to find a long term facility for her but I remained determined that she would come around. Finally on August 15<sup>th</sup> Marie woke up. I was showing her pictures of the family and all of a sudden she started telling me who was in the picture. I cried and cried with both fear and joy but mostly fear and anticipation. What would the future hold.

Shortly thereafter, we were transferred to the Halvar Jonson Centre for Brain Injury in Ponoka where we would stay for 13 months. Motherly instinct as her caregiver remained undaunted and for every hour of physio she did at the centre we did two more in the evenings. She improved vastly and September 2009 we moved from Ponoka to Grande Prairie. Now, as her only caregiver, the responsibility was totally mine and many days were frustrating and totally exhausting. I continued to remain as positive as possible knowing that as a mother, we do what we have to do. This is one journey we hadn't planned to make but life is full of surprises and here we are.

When Marie was first hurt, we had so many visitors at the hospital. The support was awesome. Family rallied with us. As time went forward the support dwindled and by the time Marie was released we found ourselves virtually alone. Marie's friends moved on and Marie was left behind. As for family, her brothers are older and on their own with their families to look after. I am not sure why but even their visits stretched to monthly, then holidays, and now they visit when we go to them. We too have moved forward with finding our own supports. Marie has had to make new friends, and continues to heal and improve. We too lost touch with old friends and are now in the process of reconnecting with them.

Living in the north, the role of a caregiver can be very frustrating. We want the best for our loved one. Services for the injured or the caregiver are difficult to find. I have spent many hours on the internet doing research; adapting ideas I have found, and then more research. There is no guide as to what you do is right or wrong but we go with the policy that honesty, safety for all, and most of all remaining positive is best. We grab every chance we can to laugh. A sense of humour when days are not going well is a definite plus. Marie's life is one of total frustration as she remembers what her life was like before her injury. She has had to relearn so much. She has had to learn to use her left hand as her right arm developed a condition called ataxia. Technologies for her are a challenge but very helpful. The challenge for me has been to learn the technologies myself so I can teach her.



# Need more information on Brain Injury?

## The Resource Library is now OPEN!

Available Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
at the Brain Injury offices in Grande Prairie and Peace River



# Brain Injury ACTIVITIES

## Traumatic Brain Injury Support in Northern Alberta

Check-out this new group on Facebook. This is a support group being organized by a Mom of a brain injury Survivor from Northern Alberta. It's an opportunity to share experiences, release frustrations, create solutions and meet new friends or maybe reconnect with old friends. The group is hoping to support Survivors, Family or Caregivers in a region where support is limited and sometimes appearing far away. Check-out the following link:

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/124385237669908/>

If the link doesn't work, search for the group **Traumatic Brain Injury Support in Northern Alberta**.

This is a closed group to maintain privacy so be patient as your request to join is being processed.

## Brain Walk

Is a program designed for school age events to help children and adults of all ages understand the importance of protecting the only brain you will ever receive. The program explains the brain functions which help you enjoy life and how easy it is to lose those functions. Contact either the Peace River or Grande Prairie ASLS offices for more information on a Brain Walk through your brain.

## Holiday Season Gathering

Join us at:

**Grimshaw Office December 22, 2011**  
from 1-4pm for an afternoon of caroling & socializing!

**Grande Prairie Golden Age Centre on**  
**December 19, 2011 from**  
**7-10pm for snacks & a Christmas Play**

## Brain Awareness

The Grande Prairie Brain Injury Office will be offering bi-monthly sessions that will cover a variety of Brain Injury topics including:

- Concentration
- Frustration
- And more

December Sessions

- Monday December 12
- 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Sessions will resume Jan 16, 2012

A social and games group will also be taking place bi-monthly

- December 15 and 19
- 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Sessions will resume Jan 9, 2012

**# 205, 10006-101 Avenue**

**Grande Prairie, AB**

We are open to suggestions!

Above dates/times don't work for you? Interested in different topics?

Let us know!

## BRAIN INJURY PROGRAM OFFICE LOCATIONS

### PEACE RIVER OFFICE

Phone: 780-624-3316  
ext.104  
Box 5006, 9604-96 Street  
Peace River, AB T8S 1R7

### GRANDE PRAIRIE OFFICE

Phone: 780-539-0433  
ext.107 or 121  
#205, 10006-101 Avenue  
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 0Y1