

The Rancho Los Amigos Scale

The **Rancho Los Amigos Scale** is an easy way to describe a brain-injured person's level of activity. The levels look simple and direct but in real life, not everyone will move smoothly through each level. A brain-injured person may move from Level 2 to Level 4 and never show any true Level 3 activity. A brain-injured person may reach Level 3 and never progress beyond that point. Even if a person reaches Level 8, it does not necessarily mean he or she is exactly as they once were. There may be slight changes. This is a brief description of the eight stages.

Level 1: *No reaction* - The brain-injured person is unconscious. They appear to be sleeping. They do not react to any stimuli. This comatose state can last for seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks or months.

Level 2: *Generalized reaction* - The brain-injured person will react but inconsistent and without purpose. The reaction is often broad body movement or garbled words and the reaction is usually the same regardless of what the stimulus is. The first reaction is usually to deep pain.

Level 3: *Localized reaction* - The brain-injured person is improving. They will react more specifically to different stimuli but the reaction is different each time. For example, they may occasionally turn their head in the direction of a speaker's voice. They may have a vague awareness of their body. They may sometimes follow simple commands such as "close your eyes" or "squeeze my hand".

Level 4: *Confused/Agitated* - The brain-injured person has become very active but they are not yet able to understand what's going on. The behavior might become bizarre. They might cry out or try to remove the feeding tube. They may be hostile and uncooperative but they are not acting out of anger or fear. This is a reaction to their confusion.

Level 5: *Confused/Inappropriate* - The brain-injured person has become less agitated. They react to simple commands in a more consistent manner. If the commands are more complicated, they get confused and react incorrectly. They

may become agitated if they are in a noisy or "busy" environment. They will not take the first step. They will react best to body aches and pains, to their own comfort and to close family members. Memory is severely damaged and they are unable to learn new information. At this level, they are in danger of "wandering off."

Level 6: *Confused/Appropriate* - Things are looking up. The brain-injured person is motivated but still depends on others to lead the way. Reactions will be more appropriate. If they are uncomfortable, they will complain. They are beginning to recognize therapy staff and are much more aware of self and family. They can easily follow simple directions. Memory of the past has improved greatly but memory of recent events is still damaged.

Level 7: *Automatic/Appropriate* - The brain-injured person seems to act appropriately in the hospital and at home. They know who they are, where they are, the date and time. All seems well but things are still not completely right. They go through daily routines automatically like a robot. Although they can dress, wash and feed themselves without help, they need guidance to stay safe. Judgment and problem-solving skills are still damaged and they cannot make realistic plans for the future.

Level 8: *Purposeful/Appropriate* - At last! The brain-injured person remembers how the past fits with the future. They are independent and can function well in society. They may still have some difficulty with reasoning, judgment and learning, especially in high stress, unusual or emergency situations. They may be actively involved in a vocational rehabilitation program, learning a new way to live.