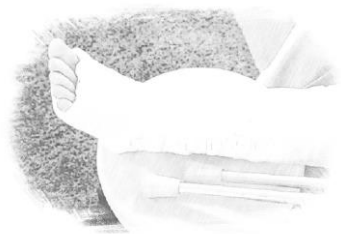


ACCURACY IN TERMINOLOGY

Emory University School of Medicine

A good start toward accuracy is understanding some basic definitions; impairment, disability, and handicap. These are not three words for the same thing. Each one describes something unique.



An **impairment** is simply a loss or abnormality in the way a body part works and it may or may not be permanent. A broken leg is an impairment but that goes away after a while. Many people are nearsighted and need to wear glasses or contact lenses. They are able to overcome their impairment and it does not constitute a disability.



A **disability**. This means just what it says—the person has limitations that interfere with normal abilities, like walking, lifting, hearing, seeing and learning. Disabilities are usually considered to be lifelong or at least long-term conditions.



A **handicap** is different from the first two. Unlike impairments and disabilities, a handicap refers to a condition or barrier imposed by the environment. For example, a person using a wheelchair may not be able to come in the front door of an old building because the stairs are a handicap for her.

Carter, Sheena. "Impairment, Disability and Handicap." Emory University School of Medicine. Atlanta, GA <http://www.pediatrics.emory.edu/divisions/neonatology/dpc/Impairment%20MX.html>



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