



Traumatic Brain Injuries: Symptoms & Impacts



What is a Traumatic Brain Injury?

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) occurs when an external force causes brain dysfunction.

The most common causes of TBI are:

- Falls
- Vehicle related collisions
- Violence
- Sports injuries
- Explosive blasts and other combat injuries.

Mild injury can cause temporary dysfunction of brain cells, but more serious injury can cause bruising, torn tissues, bleeding, permanent physical damage or death.

Physical Symptoms

- Loss of consciousness
- No loss of consciousness, but dazed, confused or disoriented
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fatigue or drowsiness
- Difficulty sleeping
- Sleeping more than usual
- Dizziness or loss of balance
- Convulsions or seizures
- Loss of coordination
- Dilation of pupils
- Numbness in fingers or toes
- Clear fluid draining from nose or ears

Sensory Symptoms

- Blurred Vision
- Ringing in the ears
- Bad taste in the mouth
- Changes in ability to smell
- Sensitivity to light or sound

Cognitive Symptoms

- Memory or concentration problems
- Mood changes or mood swings
- Feeling depressed or anxious
- Mild to profound confusion
- Agitation, combativeness or other unusual behavior
- Slurred speech
- Coma

Children's Symptoms

- Change in eating or nursing behavior
- Persistent crying and inability to be consoled
- Unusual or easy irritability
- Change in sleep habits
- Change in ability to pay attention
- Sad or depressed mood
- Loss of interest in favorite activities

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TBI & Depression

More than half of all people who suffer a traumatic brain injury will become clinically depressed in the year following the injury. This is a rate that is 8 times greater than the general population. Brain injuries themselves can cause changes in the structure and function of the brain that predispose people to depression, especially if they already have a history of depression or alcohol abuse. It is recommended that TBI patients be put on a low dose of anti-depressants as soon as possible after the injury.



Coping Strategies

There are a number of strategies that can help a person with traumatic brain injury cope with everyday life tasks:

- Join a support group for emotional support and to learn new coping strategies
- Write important details down
- Take breaks
- Alter work expectations or tasks; ask for accommodations if needed
- Avoid distractions
- Stay focused on one task at a time
- Follow a routine to minimize confusion

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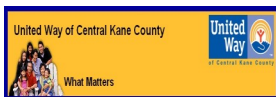
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Explosive Blasts and Other Combat Injuries

Explosive blasts are a common cause of traumatic brain injury in active-duty military personnel. Although the mechanism of damage isn't yet well understood, many researchers believe the pressure wave passing through the brain significantly disrupts brain function.

Traumatic brain injury also results from penetrating wounds, severe blows to the head with shrapnel or debris, and falls or bodily collisions with objects following an explosion.

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Local Resources

Rush University Medical Center 888/352-7874
DuPage County Vet Center 630/585-1853
Mayo Clinic 507/538-3270 www.mayo.edu
www.allabouttbi.com

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TBI Complications

Moderate to severe TBI can result in prolonged or permanent changes in the brain. These can include:

- Coma, vegetative state or brain death
- Seizures
- Fluid build up in the brain
- Nerve damage, including loss of vision, paralysis of facial muscles and swallowing problems
- Problems with reasoning
- Increased risk of stroke due to blood vessel damage
- Memory loss
- Learning difficulties
- Problems with reasoning and judgment
- Difficulty recognizing objects
- Trouble with balance or dizziness
- Insomnia
- Blind spots or double vision
- Slowing down of mental processing
- Difficulty with executive functioning, including problem solving, organization, decision-making and multi-tasking
- Difficulty understanding speech or writing
- Difficulty speaking or writing
- Inability to organize thoughts and ideas
- Trouble following conversations
- Difficulty deciphering nonverbal signals
- Changes in behavior, including self-control, risky behavior, inaccurate self-image, verbal outbursts
- Depression or Anxiety
- Mood swings
- Lack of empathy
- Anger

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Sports & Concussions

With all the media attention on football and concussions, it's easy to overlook some of the other sports with TBI risks. Traumatic brain injuries may be caused by injuries from a number of other sports, including soccer, boxing, baseball, lacrosse, skateboarding, hockey, and other high impact or extreme sports, especially in youth. Strategies for staying safe:

- Wear proper equipment and wear it correctly
- Play by the rules and practice good sportsmanship
- Pad end posts
- Check playing field for holes or uneven turf
- Learn and use proper techniques for your sport
- DO NOT ignore symptoms of concussion—get immediate medical assistance

