

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

What is Traumatic Brain Injury?

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is damage to the brain resulting from some type of outside trauma, such as a blow to the head. It is the leading cause of death and disability in children and adolescents. **Acquired** brain injury (ABI) is any brain injury that occurs during development, no matter what the source. An ABI could be caused by a stroke or illness.

What are some causes of brain injury?

- Motor vehicle injuries - TBI
- Falls - TBI
- Shaken baby syndrome - TBI
- Sports related injuries - TBI
- Concussions - TBI
- Child abuse - TBI
- Near-drowning - ABI
- Stroke - ABI

What are some signs of how serious a TBI is?

- Length of coma
- Length of amnesia (partial or total loss of memory)
- Altered mental status
- Bleeding in the brain (subdural hematoma)

What are some problems resulting from TBI?

The majority of behavior problems after TBI result from inappropriate accommodations for the changes in thinking ability that are caused by the TBI. These behavior problems are not caused by willful disobedience, stubbornness, or lack of motivation by the child. Some of the behavior problems seen in children and adolescents after a TBI are:

- Temper tantrums or very irritable behavior
- Emotional swings
- Aggressive or dangerous behavior
- Sleep disturbances
- Poor judgment
- Attention problems

The following physical, cognitive (thinking), and learning problems can also occur for children who have had a TBI:

- Slow mental processing
- Difficulty organizing
- Difficulty handling complex information
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Inability to keep up with others
- Inability to resume normal schedule
- Lack of judgment
- Inability to think quickly
- Withdrawal from activities with other people
- Stress because of the inability to return to normalcy
- Fatigue
- Headaches

TBI and its after effects can be very upsetting, both for your child and for your family as a whole. If your child has had a head injury and you are concerned about his or her behavior afterwards, we suggest you call your Primary Care Physician to answer your questions, help you make a plan, and make appropriate referrals.

Injury prevention is very important for someone who has already had a head injury. We recommend that children and adults wear a helmet when participating in activities such as biking or contact sports that might cause a head injury.