

## **TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)**

What is traumatic brain injury? A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain. Not all blows or jolts to the head result in a TBI. The severity of such an injury may range from “mild,” – a brief change in mental status or consciousness – to “severe”, an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury. A TBI can result in short or long-term problems with independent function.

TBI may be caused by bullets, fragments, blasts, falls, motor vehicle crashes, or assaults. Blasts are a leading cause of TBI for active duty military personnel in war zones.

Everyone is at risk of having a TBO. However, recent data shows that males are about twice as likely as females to sustain a TBI. Two age groups shown to be at the highest risks for TBI are 0 to 4 year olds, and 15 to 19 year olds. Certain military duties, such as paratroopers, increase the risk of sustaining a TBI.

Some long term consequences of TBI are changes affecting thinking, sensation, language, or emotions.

- \* Thinking – memory and reasoning
- \* Sensation – touch, taste, and smell
- \* Language – communication, expression, and understanding
- \* Emotion – depression, anxiety, personality changes, aggression, acting out, and social inappropriateness.

TBI can also cause epilepsy and increase the risk for conditions such as Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, and other brain disorders that become more prevalent with age.

Some symptoms of mild TBI or Concussion:

- \*Headaches
- \*Dizziness
- \*Excessive fatigue (tiredness)
- \*Concentration problems
- \*Forgetting things (memory problems)
- \*Irritability
- \*Sleep problems
- \*Balance problems

- \*Ringing in the ears
- \*Vision change

#### Recovery from TBI:

- \*Get plenty of sleep at night and rest during the day
- \*Return to normal activities gradually, not all at once
- \*Until you are better, avoid activities that can lead to a second injury such as contact or recreational sports. Remember to use helmets and safety belts to decrease your risk of another TBI.
- \*Don't drink alcohol, it may slow your brain recovery and it puts you at risk of further injury.
- \*If it is difficult to remember things, write them down.
- \*If you find you are losing important items, begin putting them in the same place all the time.
- \*If you are easily distracted or having difficulty in concentrating, try doing only one thing at a time in a quiet, non-distracting environment.
- \*If you feel irritable, then remove yourself from the situation that is irritating you or use relaxation techniques to help manage the situation. Irritability is worse when you are tired, so rest will help.
- \*Be patient. Healing from a brain injury takes time.

Symptoms of mild TBI or concussion often resolve within hours to days and almost always improve over 1-3 months. However, if symptoms persist without improvement, medical treatment should be sought.

For more information about TBI contact:

\*Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC). This center develops and provides advanced TBI-specific evaluation, treatment and follow-up care for military personnel, their dependents and veterans with brain injury. Call DVBIC toll-free at 1-800-870, or web contact at [www.DVBIC.org](http://www.DVBIC.org).

\*National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (CDC). The National Center for Injury Prevention and control works to reduce morbidity, disability, mortality, and costs associated with injuries. CSC has a wide variety of resources and materials about TBI and other types of injuries. Call CDC toll-free at 1-800-232-4636 or visit the web site at [www.cdc.gov/injury](http://www.cdc.gov/injury).

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