

Preventing Traumatic Brain Injury



Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is an injury to your brain that changes the way your brain works. A TBI can be mild, moderate, or severe. Most TBIs are mild. A TBI can change the way you think, feel, act, and move.

A TBI can result from a blow or jolt to, or penetration of, the head. Some causes are a fall, a car accident, a fight, or a sports injury. Blast injuries cause TBI in military personnel who've been exposed to an explosion. In 2016, the leading causes of injury from TBI-related hospital stays were unintended falls and motor vehicle crashes.

Preventing a second TBI

If you had a TBI in the past, your recovery may be slower if you have another TBI. If you still have symptoms of a TBI, they can increase your risk for a second TBI. These symptoms include:

- Sleepiness
- Dizziness
- Extreme tiredness (fatigue)
- Vision problems
- Slowed thinking
- Balance problems

Make sure you are aware of these symptoms. Work closely with your healthcare team to manage them. Don't try to drive or take part in any dangerous activity if your symptoms put you at risk for an accident.

Preventing a first TBI

Many TBIs occur during car accidents. Falls, firearms, explosions, and assaults are other major causes. Falls are a leading cause of TBIs for adults ages 45 and older and for children. Car accidents and assaults are leading causes for teens and young adults. Contact sports such as football also raise the risk for TBI.

Alcohol or drug abuse can lead to a first or even a second TBI. Risky behavior is another danger that can lead to a TBI. Mental health issues like depression and posttraumatic stress disorder can lead to poor decision-making and high-risk behavior. This behavior includes drug and alcohol problems. All these factors can increase your risk for a TBI.

Tips for preventing TBI

The first tip is to recognize the dangers of a TBI and not take part in risky behavior. Here are some other tips:

- Take good care of yourself. Eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly. Get good quality sleep.
- Make your home safe from falls. Remove throw rugs, use handrails on stairways, install good lighting, and use nonslip mats in the shower.
- Keep guns unloaded and locked away.
- Have your vision checked at least once a year. Poor vision can increase your risk for falls and other types of accidents.
- If you have numbness in your feet related to diabetes or other health problems, don't walk in poorly lit areas.

- Spend time with your friends and family and be active in social activities. People who become isolated and withdrawn from loved ones are more likely to take part in risky behaviors.
- Wear a seatbelt when you drive or are a passenger in any vehicle. Children should be correctly secured in a car seat that's right for their age, weight, and height.
- Wear a helmet when you ride a motorcycle or bike. Also wear one if you do any high-risk activities such as skiing, contact sports, or snowmobiling.
- Don't use illegal drugs. And limit your alcohol intake.

If you've been diagnosed with a TBI, work closely with your healthcare provider until your brain heals. Be aware that your symptoms could put you at risk for another TBI. If you've never had a TBI, you can prevent one by not taking part in risky behaviors.

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