

TIPS

for Coping With Traumatic Brain Injury

Traumatic brain injury (TBI), also called brain injury or head injury, occurs when a blow to the head causes brain dysfunction. Mild TBI, such as a concussion, involves temporary cognitive dysfunction. More serious TBI involves physical damage to the brain that can result in long-term complications or death. The following tips may help you cope with the consequences of TBI.



Know the causes. TBI can occur from common events, such as falls, vehicle-related collisions, workplace accidents, or sports injuries, but also from violence, explosive blasts, and other combat injuries.

Understand your risk factors. Anyone can sustain a TBI at any age, but people most at risk are children, especially newborns to 4-year-olds, young adults between the ages of 15 and 24, adults age 75 and older, and military service members.

Be well-versed in possible outcomes. Having a TBI may increase a person's risk of Alzheimer's disease, dementia pugilistica, Parkinson's disease, and other neurologic conditions, although the risk for any individual is uncertain.

Expect changes to occur. Some people with TBI will experience seizures within the first week of injury. Post-traumatic epilepsy, which results in recurring seizures, also may develop from serious injuries. Also, headaches can develop after TBI.

Rehabilitate wisely. Ask your doctor to recommend rehabilitation services that might help with your recovery from TBI. Don't rush back to full activity. Because your ability to react may be slower after a head injury, ask your doctor when it is safe for you to drive a car, use heavy equipment, play sports, ride a bike, or engage in other physical activities.

Think clearly. You may experience cognitive problems, such as difficulties with memory, concentration, or learning. Ask your doctor about cognitive rehabilitation services. You may need to re-learn skills that you had before your injury. Write things down if you experience memory problems.

Avoid another injury. Avoid doing anything that may cause another blow or jolt to the head or body. If you suspect a brain injury, go to a physician for an examination because TBIs are usually an emergency and can swiftly progress without treatment.

This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at info@neurologyreviews.com.

Tips for Patients are available for download at www.neurologyreviews.com.