

# UNDERSTANDING TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY



A **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)** happens when there's a sudden and forceful blow or jolt to the head, or when an object pierces the skull and damages brain tissue. TBIs can vary in severity from mild concussions to severe injuries that have long-term effects.

## HERE ARE SOME COMMON CAUSES:

### FALLS

Falls are the most common cause of TBIs, especially for young children and older adults. This can happen if you trip and hit your head or fall from a height (like off a ladder or stairs)



### CAR ACCIDENTS

Vehicle collisions can cause TBIs due to the impact of your head hitting the steering wheel, dashboard, or window, or due to sudden acceleration/deceleration forces that make the brain move inside the skull (even without direct contact).



### SPORTS INJURIES

High-impact sports like football, soccer, boxing, hockey, and even skateboarding can result in TBIs. Concussions are common in sports, especially where head collisions or falls are frequent.



### VIOLENCE OR ASSAULT

Injuries from physical violence—like being hit on the head, domestic abuse, or gunshot wounds—can also result in TBIs.

### EXPLOSIONS OR BLASTS

This cause is more common for military personnel. Explosions can create a pressure wave that impacts the brain even if there is no direct head injury. This is often referred to as a "blast injury."



### STRUCK BY AN OBJECT

Being hit by an object—whether in an accident, on a construction site, or from something falling—can lead to a TBI. Even something like a falling branch or a heavy object dropped from above can cause significant trauma to the brain.



## RECREATIONAL ACCIDENTS



Accidents from recreational activities like biking, skiing, or ATV riding are also common causes of TBIs, especially when helmets aren't used.

TBIs can happen to anyone, and the effects can range from mild, temporary symptoms to long-lasting or permanent changes in brain function. It's important to recognize when you've sustained a head injury and seek medical attention if you're unsure about its severity.

If you've experienced a TBI, you might be dealing with some changes in how you think, feel, or even how you process information.

## HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO HELP YOU NAVIGATE THIS JOURNEY:

### TAKE BREAKS

Your brain needs time to recover. Overdoing it can make things worse, even if it's something that seems simple. Take frequent, small breaks throughout your day to avoid feeling overstimulated or overwhelmed. Think of it like hitting the reset button for your brain.



### SLEEP IS #1

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### FOCUS ON ONE THING AT A TIME



Multitasking isn't the move when you're dealing with a TBI. Break things down into small, manageable tasks and tackle them one by one. Avoid distractions like having the TV on or too much noise when you're trying to concentrate. Use a notebook or an app to jot down notes and set reminders—keeping track can really help.

### STAY HYDRATED AND EAT WELL



It might seem simple, but staying hydrated and eating balanced meals can really make a difference in your recovery. Dehydration and low blood sugar can worsen headaches, fatigue, and difficulty concentrating. Make sure to drink plenty of water and eat nutritious meals that fuel your brain and body.

## KEEP YOUR ENVIRONMENT CALM

After a TBI, you might find that you're more sensitive to things like bright lights, loud noises, or busy spaces. If possible, create a calm and quiet environment for yourself. Dim the lights, use noise-canceling headphones, or find a quiet spot to focus or rest when things get overwhelming.



## MANAGE SCREEN TIME

Staring at a screen for too long—whether it's your phone, computer, or TV—can be tough on your brain post-TBI. Try limiting your screen time, especially if you start noticing headaches or eye strain. Give your eyes and brain regular breaks from screens.



## SPEAK UP FOR YOURSELF



Sometimes, conversations can feel like they're happening too fast, or you might struggle with finding the right words. It's totally okay to ask people to slow down or rephrase what they're saying. Advocating for yourself is important—don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it.



It's normal to feel frustrated with yourself after a brain injury. You might think you should be recovering faster or feel like you "should be better" by now. TBI can affect how quickly you process information, your memory, and your mood. You may find that you are exhausted after work, school or even completing "small" tasks. Be kind to yourself as you heal—recovery takes time.

## PATIENCE IS KEY

## LIGHT EXERCISE, IF POSSIBLE

If your doctor gives the green light, light exercise can help improve your mood and cognitive function. Activities like walking, yoga, or gentle stretching can be beneficial, but it's important to avoid anything strenuous or risky until your brain has had time to heal.



## CONSIDER ACCOMMODATIONS

If you find that school or work is overwhelming, know that you can request disability accommodations to reduce your stress and improve your success.

