

# Brain Injury Fact Sheet

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## WHAT IS A TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY?

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is an insult to the brain caused by an impact (e.g., fall or car accident), internal damage (e.g., gunshot or surgical intervention) or loss of oxygen. Although not always visible, TBI may cause enduring physical, emotional, intellectual and social changes for the survivor. Long-term effects place an enormous emotional and financial burden on the individual's family and strain medical and other service systems due to high costs and often life-long needs.

## WHAT HAPPENS?

The effects of a head injury result from the soft tissue of the brain colliding against the hard surface of the skull. Nerve fibers may be stretched, torn or bruised. Following a minor head injury there are some common problems. Some symptoms occur immediately, but some may become noticeable over time as the person returns to their daily life-style. In many cases, the symptoms cause subtle difficulty in maintaining previous work, school, family or social responsibilities. Listed below are common problems:

### COGNITIVE

Forgetfulness  
Difficulty concentrating  
Confusion  
Slowed thinking  
Reduced organization and efficiency  
Difficulty completing tasks

### PHYSICAL

Dizziness  
Headache  
Blurred Vision  
Nausea & Vomiting  
Sensitivity to light or noise  
Fatigue  
Difficulty Sleeping

### EMOTIONAL

Irritable or moody  
Depression or withdrawal  
Increased frustration  
Loss of interest in activities  
Temper outbursts

## HOW WILL I REGOGNIZE THESE PROBLEMS?

You may notice things are just "off," familiar situations seem different and you have to work much harder to do things that came easily before:

- Forgetting names of familiar people
- Losing belongings, forgetting where you put something
- Missing appointments because you forgot
- Small noises and sights distract you
- You feel confused in noisy places like stores

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## HOW WILL I REGOGNIZE THESE PROBLEMS?

- When interrupted briefly, you forget what you were doing or need time to get back on track
- Fatigue sets in earlier in the day
- You can't find the right words
- Automatic responses take more thought, effort and time
- You are easily annoyed and more emotional
- Conflicts and arguments occur more often and unexpectedly
- Laughing, crying and anger are much closer to the surface
- You feel like you are "spinning your wheels," but getting nowhere
- Chores and activities are difficult to complete and may be done in bits and pieces
- Friends or family tell you you're a "different person" than before, you miss subtle hints and reactions
- Although you know what you want to do, it is difficult to plan how to start and what to do next

These types of problems do not mean you are "going crazy" or are "abnormal," even though these are not normal experiences for you.

## TBI STATISTICS

- Brain injury affects over **2 million** people each year in the U.S.
- **Every 15 seconds** someone receives a TBI in the U.S., and **every 5 minutes** one of these people will become permanently disabled
- Brain injury claims more than **50,000 lives** and leaves more than **80,000 individuals** with lifelong disabilities each year
- Head injury is the **leading cause of death and disability in children and young adults** in the U.S.
- Individuals **age 15 to 24 have the highest risk of TBI**. The risk also increases after 60
- The **lifetime costs** for one person surviving a severe TBI can reach **\$4 million**