

# SOME FACTS ABOUT TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

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**A** traumatic brain injury has far-reaching and comprehensive effects on a person's life. Changes in behavioral patterns, from the simple and basic to the most advanced and complex, can occur because of an injury to the brain. It is not uncommon for people with brain injuries to have to relearn a wide variety of skills and to maintain this effort day after day, year after year. The good news is that loss of function because of a traumatic brain injury often slowly returns, at least to some degree. With appropriate rehabilitation, people with these injuries can work to improve their functioning and recreate, if not resume, their former lives.

## What is a traumatic brain injury (TBI)?

"Traumatic" in this case does not refer to emotions but to the mechanical cause of the injury. A traumatic injury to the brain is always caused by an external force: a blow to the head, a penetration of the skull, or even a whiplash can cause a traumatic brain injury. Other causes of damage to the brain, such as vascular accidents ("strokes"), aneurysms, tumors, and congenital defects are called "acquired" brain injuries.

## What are the conditions of TBI?

Depending on the nature of the injury, the results could include changes in physical, mental, or behavioral functioning. Some examples of physical impairments are paralysis (partial or complete), seizures, or loss of sensory abilities (taste, touch, smell, vision, hearing). Mental effects might include impairments to memory, concentration, judgment, decision-making and language. TBI can also lead to depression, impulsiveness, volatility of emotions, or a marked change in personality. These are just examples; for a more complete list, contact the Brain Injury Association.

## What are the common causes of TBI?

According to a report by the Arizona Department of Health Services, almost 40% of all traumatic brain

injuries in Arizona are the result of "transportation" injuries – truck, car or motorcycle accidents, for instance; this also includes people struck by a moving vehicle. Approximately 16% of injuries are the results of falls, while less than 2% of injuries occur as the result of accidents during sports and recreational activities. Of increasing concern, almost 20% of all traumatic brain injury cases are the result of violence – assaults, suicide and homicide attempts.

## How to prevent injury:

Drive safely and wear your seat belt. This alone could substantially reduce the incidence of traumatic brain injury. Exercising caution in all recreational activities and wearing the proper footwear and headgear can also go a long way toward preventing injury. Wearing a helmet, for instance, when riding a bicycle or motorcycle can change the course of your life.

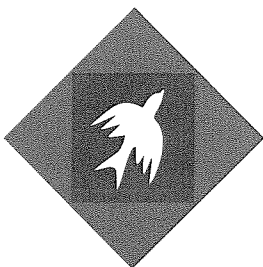
## Symptoms of brain injury:

Although the impact of a severe brain injury is obvious, the lingering effects of a milder brain injury can sometimes be subtle and may not be recognized immediately. Recurring headaches, dizziness or trouble with balance, blurred vision, sleep disturbances, paranoia, eating disorders, loss of memory and loss of writing and reading abilities may be signs of possible brain injury. And there are many others. You should consult your doctor if you notice any unusual changes in behavior after an injury.

## Whom to call for more information:

Brain Injury Association of Arizona  
Info-line (602) 323-9165  
(888) 500-9165 (toll-free)

Brain Injury Association of America (800) 444-6443  
You can also check this web site: [www.biaaz.org](http://www.biaaz.org)



## Arizona Governor's Council on Spinal and Head Injuries

10640 North 28th Drive, Suite B-102 • Phoenix, Arizona 85029  
Telephone: (602) 863-0484 • FAX: (602) 863-0521  
TTY: use Arizona Relay Service  
[www.azheadspine.org](http://www.azheadspine.org)

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