

What is a Traumatic Brain Injury?

A traumatic brain injury is caused by a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain. The severity of a TBI may range from mild to severe and may include a brief or extended period of unconsciousness, change in mental status or amnesia after injury. (CDC definition) TBIs can also be caused by shaking a baby and/or other acts of physical abuse of children.

What are the Major Causes of a TBI in Children?

- Falls on the playground, down stairs (especially in walkers), slipping on a wet surface, falls from beds and changing tables
- Motor vehicle related incidents
 - Infants/toddlers out of or in inadequate seats
 - Inadequate belting of passengers
- Pedestrian struck by vehicle
- Motor vehicle crashes
- Sports/Recreation related injuries
- Family Violence
 - Shaken Baby Syndrome
 - Physical abuse of children



Children with Special Health Care Needs are at Risk for Injury to the Brain.

Brain injuries, no matter what the cause or severity can result in a wide range of physical, emotional and learning problems that may require a lifelong need for a wide range of support services.

Tips for Parents

You are the critical link for passing on information to medical personnel, educators, consultants and others involved in your child's care. Since a child's brain is a developing brain it often takes longer for the effects of the injuries to be seen.

Be Prepared!

- Create a binder
- Document Symptoms:
What symptoms are present, how often, when and how long?
- Write things down:
What seems to help, what has not
- Play a central role in all discussions about your child. Advocate!
- Identify what your child's abilities, difficulties and needs were prior to injury



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Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) in Children with Disabilities and Children with Special Health Care Needs



Children with Special Health Care Needs and/or Disabilities may be at greater risk for Traumatic Brain Injuries:

- They are at an increased risk for falls
- They are at greater risk of physical abuse
- They may be victims of bullying more often than other children thereby increasing their risk of physical assaults

Inform / Educate Yourself

Recognizing TBI

An infant or child with a pre-existing disorder or medical condition who sustains a TBI may exhibit symptoms that are similar to other conditions. TBI symptoms can look the same as those that are already part of the current disability and may not be easily recognized by those providing services.

What should I look for?

While immediate medical symptoms may be visible following an injury to the head, there may also be subtle changes over time that are less clear to parents/caregivers. It is important that you look for changes to your child's typical patterns and document them. Immediate symptoms may include:

- Nausea, vomiting, excessive crying, loss of consciousness
- A dramatic change in your child's behavior or in what they seem to understand
- Excessive repetitive motion
- Changes in appearance of the eye(s)



Some children do not exhibit immediate symptoms therefore you need to continue to observe for:

- Changes in short term memory
- Changes in physical ability or coordination
- Change in play pattern or social skills
- Lack of interest in a favorite toy
- Change in behavior or sleep pattern
- Decrease in language/communication
- Decreased appetite
- Decreased smiling/vocalizing

You should know

Children with significant physical and cognitive disabilities are a unique challenge to healthcare providers because they do not present in the classic manner for brain injury. Therefore, they are at a higher risk of being undiagnosed or misdiagnosed.

As a parent or guardian:

Know your child (his/her behavior and learning patterns)

Maintain a record of incidents involving your child that could result in a TBI (create a binder for this purpose)

You are not alone!

If you suspect that your child has sustained a brain injury seek medical attention immediately!



Consult your child's pediatric provider or local Emergency Department

For more information about resources in your area call: Infoline 211

The Connecticut Family Support Network - (877) 376 - 2329 or (877) FSN - 2DAY

Check out The Brain Injury Association of CT at: <http://biact.homestead.com>

Department of Social Services
TBI Implementation Project
(860) 424 - 5668

TBI Among Infants and Children Connecticut Statistics

(2005-2007 CT DPH data)

- Between 2005-2007 there were 88 deaths, 1,445 inpatient hospitalizations and 24,472 emergency department visits related to traumatic brain injuries (TBI) among children and adolescents birth-19 years of age
- Falls cause the majority (60%) of hospitalizations among children less than 10 years of age. Motor vehicle crashes (43%) are the leading cause for TBI hospitalizations among the 10-19 year age group

National Statistics CDC data

- Males 0-4 have the highest rate of TBI related emergency department visits, hospitalizations and deaths
- Among children 0 - 14, falls account for 50.2% of all TBIs
- 24% of children age 0-14 sustain TBIs as a result of colliding with a moving or stationary object (struck by/against events)
- Assaults account for 2.9% of TBIs in children 0-14 years old

