

QUICK GUIDE

Brain Injury Basics

The brain can be hurt in many different ways: falls, sports, car accidents, assaults, strokes, and brain tumors are some of the most common types of injuries. Brain injuries can be either traumatic or non-traumatic, but can cause similar problems in a person's life.

What are the two types of brain injury?

Traumatic brain injuries happen when the head is injured by a blow, jolt, or bump. In some cases, the skull is crushed, fractured, or penetrated by a foreign object. Falls, car accidents, sports-related accidents, and assaults are some of the most common causes of traumatic brain injuries.

Acquired, or non-traumatic brain injuries happen because of something inside the brain... like stroke, lack of oxygen, infection, brain tumors, and exposure to toxic substances.

What symptoms can occur after an injury?

Headaches & Pain

- Frequent headaches
- Head, face or jaw pain
- Unexplained body pain

Balance Problems

- Dizziness
- Tripping or falling often

Sensory Changes

- Bothered by smells, lights or sounds
- Blurry or double vision
- Changes in taste, smell or appetite
- Ringing in ears, hearing loss

Sleep Problems

- Tiredness, change in sleep patterns
- Mixing days and nights up

Personality, Mood & Behavior

- Mood swings
- Depression and/or anxiety
- Slow to respond
- Low energy
- Taking risks without thinking first
- Starting to use or react differently to alcohol or drugs
- Changes in sexual behavior

Thinking & Communication

- Memory or concentration problems
- Reacting or thinking slowly
- Easily confused or mixed up
- Trouble making decisions
- Trouble planning/starting/finishing a task
- Difficulty understanding what is said or read
- Issues with speech (finding words, making sentences)
- Trouble listening, staying on topic, talking too much

What can I do for myself or my loved one to help with recovery?

Although symptoms may improve with treatment and time, they may not go away completely. The key for many survivors and caregivers is learning how to recognize problems caused by the brain injury and learn new ways to manage them.

Some things you can do at home:

- Make a schedule or routine for daily activities
- Make time for daily exercise (even if light and short)
- Make sure living quarters are safe and easy to move around in
- Place frequently used items in memorable places
- Make sure lots of lighting is available; sometimes fluorescent lighting can be bothersome
- Be mindful that too much noise can be overwhelming and may make it difficult to concentrate

Some things you can do while visiting a loved one in the hospital:

- Take your loved one outside and get a breath of fresh air (if allowed)
- Display familiar pictures of family, friends, and pets in the room
- Talk about familiar names and places; talk about shared interests and experiences
- Talk to your loved one when he/she is awake and alert, not tired
- Encourage communication by asking simple questions

Adjusting to life after brain injury can be challenging. And sometimes, accepting changes within yourself can be even more challenging. At the Brain Injury Association of Virginia, our trained experts are available to speak with you about your personal situation and answer your questions. Our services are free and confidential.

To get in touch:

Call **1-800-444-6443**

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