Traumatic Brain Injury

Working with persons with traumatic brain injury (TBI) in the community.
Fact or Fiction about Brain Injury

1. Traumatic brain injury is caused by a disease.  
2. Children are more at risk for getting a TBI than people over 65. 
3. A closed head injury can be caused by not wearing a seatbelt. 
4. Females get just as many brain injuries as males. 
5. A brain injury can cause paralysis. 
6. A TBI usually goes away in about 10 years. 
7. A concussion is a TBI. 
8. Bicycle and motorcycle helmets can prevent TBI. 
9. A person with a TBI is mentally ill. 
10. Anyone can get a traumatic brain injury.

Answers

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The brain, what is it?

The Brain
- Weighs 3-4 pounds
- Made of soft, spongy material
- Floats in fluid
- Protected by the skull

The skull, what does it do?

The Skull
- Protects the brain
- Made of bone
- Can be broken like the bones in the arm or leg
Your brain is the most complex part of the body. It is like a computer or the control center of the body. The brain sends messages to the rest of the body telling it what it needs to do or how it needs to react to situations or stimuli.

Think of your brain as your very own personal computer—you take it with you everywhere.
Do you ever wonder what your brain does for you?

Many things your brain does you don’t even “think” about.

**Imagine not being able to do one or more of the following:**

- Learn
- Concentrate
- Smell
- Problem Solve
- Taste
- Reason
- Plan
- See
- Hear
- Move
- Feel
- Make a Decision
- Breathe
- Remember
What is a Traumatic Brain Injury?

An injury to the brain caused by something outside of the body.

There are different types of brain injuries. A traumatic one is different from damage caused by a stroke or lack of oxygen.

Types of Traumatic Brain Injuries

Closed Head Injury  Penetrating Head Injury

Both can have equally serious consequences.
Traumatic brain injuries are either closed head or penetrating injuries.

A closed head injury means the skull was not broken or damaged. A person may have fallen or gotten a bump on the head or they may have been in a car wreck and the brain hit the inside of the skull hard enough to cause bruising.

A penetrating injury means the skull was damaged. Remember, the skull is made of cone so it can be broken. This can be caused by a gunshot to the head or a baseball bat hitting the head with enough force to break the skull.
Who is at risk?

Traumatic brain injury is an “equal opportunity” injury. There are times when one is at higher risk of injury but no one is immune. Statistics show that people ages 15-25, especially males, are at higher risk. This is a time when one learns to drive, may be involved in sports or moves away from home.

Another group at higher risk are older people. This is due to failing eyesight, poor mobility skills that may increase their risk of falling.

Some professions may also put a person at higher risk for TBI.
Impact on Life

The impact a TBI can have on someone’s life varies depending on the severity of the injury and what part of the brain was affected. Remember all the things your brain does from earlier? Any or all of these could be affected in one way or another.

Ways a TBI may affect a person’s abilities

- Motor skills
- Cognitive/thinking issues
  - Memory ability
  - Attention deficits
- Emotional & Behavioral Issues
  - Impulsive behavior
  - Frustration
What do you need to know to help someone you work with who has a traumatic brain injury?

Strategies and Tips

Physical Problems

- Understand that it may take longer to perform physical tasks
- Be aware of possible issues with balance, strength, coordination, fatigue
- Allow extra time, rest breaks
- Ask about activity limitations recommended by doctor

Memory Problems

- Repeat important information
- Provide important information in writing
- Provide additional time or practice to learn new things
- Make it a habit: do things the same way as much as
Strategies and Tips

Attention Problems

- Encourage person to pay attention when you are giving directions (“Let’s focus on this”)
- One-on-one often easier than group
- Minimize distractions
  - Schedule times when area is less populated
  - Take to a quieter area of gym/room
- Have person repeat back or demonstrate to make sure

Behavioral Issues

- Understand that behavior may be related to injury; try not to take it personally
- Move to a quiet area to help calm down
- Empathize with them, let them know you understand
- Do not engage in an argument
- Praise for discussing upsetting things in a calm manner (“I really appreciate how you talked about this”)
Want more information?

Check out these web sites

www.tbicommunity.org
www.biausa.org
www.brainline.org