

What is Brain Injury?

An Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) is any type of damage to the brain acquired after birth.

ABIs are classified as either:

- **“Non-traumatic”** – caused by either an internal or external source, such as stroke, brain tumours, infection, poisoning, hypoxia, ischemia, encephalopathy or substance abuse.

For more information about “Non-traumatic” Brain Injuries, please visit these sites:

[National Stroke Association](#)

[National Brain Tumor Society](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke](#)

[Epilepsy Foundation](#)

[National Institute on Drug Abuse](#)

- **“Traumatic”** – TBI

What is a traumatic brain injury?

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is defined as a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain. Not all blows or jolts to the head result in a TBI. The severity of such an injury may range from "mild," i.e., a brief change in mental status or consciousness to "severe," i.e., an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury. A TBI can result in short or long-term problems with independent function.

How many people have TBI?

Of the 1.7 million who sustain a TBI each year in the United States:

- 52,000 die
- 275,000 are hospitalized
- 1.36 million are treated and released from an emergency department or who receive no care is unknown

The number of people with TBI who are not seen in an emergency department or who receive no care is unknown.

What causes TBI?

The leading causes of TBI are:

- Falls (35.2%)
- Motor vehicle-traffic crashes (17.3%)
- Struck by/against (16.5%)
- Assaults (10%)

Blasts are a leading cause of TBI for active duty military personnel in war zones.

Who is at highest risk for TBI?

- Males are about 1.5 times as likely as females to sustain a TBI.
- The two age groups at highest risk for TBI are 0 to 4 year olds and 15 to 19 year olds.
- Certain military duties (e.g., paratrooper) increase the risk of sustaining a TBI.
- African Americans have the highest death rate from TBI.

What are the long-term consequences of TBI?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 6 million Americans currently have a long-term or lifelong need for help to perform activities of daily living as a result of a TBI.

According to one study, about 40% of those hospitalized with a TBI had at least one unmet need for services one year after their injury. The most frequent unmet needs were:

- Improving memory and problem solving
- Managing stress and emotional upsets
- Controlling one's temper
- Improving one's job skills

TBI can cause a wide range of functional changes affecting thinking, language, learning, emotions, behavior, and/or sensation. It can also cause epilepsy and increase the risk for conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and other brain disorders that become more prevalent with age.