

# Facts about Traumatic Brain Injury

## 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 1.4 million who sustain a TBI each year in the United States:

- ♦ 50,000 die;
- ♦ 235,000 are hospitalized; and
- ♦ 1.1 million are treated and released from an emergency department.<sup>1</sup>

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 (28%);
- ♦ Motor vehicle-traffic crashes (20%); and
- ♦ Assaults (11%).<sup>1</sup>

Blasts are a leading cause of TBI for active duty military personnel in war zones.<sup>2</sup>



## Who is at highest risk for TBI?

- ♦ Males are about 1.5 times as likely as females to sustain a TBI.<sup>1</sup>
- ♦ The two age groups at highest risk for TBI are 0 to 4 year olds and 15 to 19 year olds.<sup>1</sup>
- ♦ Certain military duties (e.g., paratrooper) increase the risk of sustaining a TBI.<sup>3</sup>
- ♦ African Americans have the highest death rate from TBI.<sup>1</sup>

## What are the costs of TBI?

Direct medical costs and indirect costs such as lost productivity of TBI totaled an estimated \$56.3 billion in the United States in 1995.<sup>4</sup>

## What are the long-term consequences of TBI?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that at least 5.3 million Americans currently have a long-term or lifelong need for help to perform activities of daily living as a result of a TBI.<sup>5</sup>

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; and
- ♦ Improving one's job skills.<sup>6</sup>

TBI can cause a wide range of functional changes affecting thinking, sensation, language, and/or emotions. 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.<sup>7</sup>

### Brain Injury Association of America

www.biausa.org  
800-444-6443

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov  
800-311-3435

### Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center

www.dvbic.org  
800-870-9244

### Health Resources and Services Administration

www.hrsa.gov  
301-443-3376

### National Association of State Head Injury Administrators

www.nashia.org  
301-656-3500

### National Brain Injury Research Treatment and Training Foundation

www.nbirtt.org  
434-220-4824

### National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research, NICHD, NIH

www.nichd.nih.gov/about/ncmrr  
800-370-2943

### National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/nidrr  
202-245-7640

### National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, NIH

www.ninds.nih.gov  
800-352-9424

### North American Brain Injury Society

www.nabis.org  
703-960-6500

### Social Security Administration

www.ssa.gov  
800-772-1213

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