## Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is an injury to the brain caused by the head being hit by something or shaken violently. This injury can change how the person acts, moves, and thinks. A traumatic brain injury can also change how a student learns and acts in school. The term TBI is not used for a person who is born with a brain injury. It also is not used for brain injuries that happen during birth.

### Characteristics

**Physical disabilities:** Children with TBI may have problems speaking, seeing, hearing, and using their other senses. They may have headaches and feel tired a lot. They may also have trouble with skills such as writing or drawing. Their muscles may suddenly contract or tighten (this is called spasticity). They may also have seizures. Their balance and walking may also be affected. They may be partly or completely paralyzed on one side of the body, or both sides.

**Difficulties with thinking:** Children with TBI may have trouble with short-term memory (being able to remember something from one minute to the next, like what the teacher just said). They may also have trouble with their long-term memory (being able to remember information from a while ago, like facts learned last month). They may have trouble concentrating and only be able to focus their attention for a short time. They may think slowly. They may have trouble talking and listening to others. They may also have difficulty with reading and writing, planning, understanding the order in which events happen (called sequencing), and judgment.

**Social, behavioral, or emotional problems:** Children with TBI may have sudden changes in mood, anxiety, and depression. They may have trouble relating to others. They may be restless and may laugh or cry a lot. They may not have much motivation or much control over their emotions.

### Tips for Parents

- Learn about TBI. The more you know, the more you can help yourself and your child.
- Work with the medical team to understand your child’s injury and treatment plan. Don’t be shy about asking questions. Tell them what you know or think. Make suggestions.
- Keep track of your child’s treatment. A 3-ring binder or a box can help you store this history. As your child recovers, you may meet with many doctors, nurses, and others. Write down what they say. Put any paperwork they give you in the notebook or throw it in the box. You can’t remember all this! Also, if you need to share any of this paperwork with someone else, make a copy. Don’t give away your original!
- Talk to other parents whose children have TBI.
- If your child was in school before the injury, plan for his or her return to school.

### Resources


TBI Educators [http://cbirt.org/resources/educators/](http://cbirt.org/resources/educators/)
Brainline - Information available in English and Spanish  http://www.brainline.org/

Center on Brain Injury Research and Training  http://cbirt.org/

Family Caregiver Alliance  https://caregiver.org/

TBI Recovery Center  http://www.tbirecoverycenter.org/