

## Patient Information about Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

<http://www.neurologychannel.com/patient-information-tbi/index.shtml>

Traumatic brain injury (TBI), commonly called head injury, is brain damage that results from head trauma. Any brain injury is serious. Minor brain injuries usually do not cause lasting effects; however, severe brain injuries can cause devastating, life-changing consequences, including coma and death.

Traumatic brain injury symptoms depend on the severity of the brain damage and the area(s) of the brain affected by the injury. Common signs of TBI include headache, dizziness, loss of balance, vision changes, and memory loss (post-traumatic amnesia [PTA]). Anyone who experiences symptoms after receiving a blow to the head should seek immediate medical care.

Here are some questions to ask your doctor (e.g., neurologist) about traumatic brain injury. If you or a family member or loved one has experienced TBI, **print this page**, check the questions you would like answered, and give it to your physician. It is important to learn as much as possible about head injury prevention and about treatment and rehabilitation following a brain injury.

### Questions to Ask Your Doctor about TBI Diagnosis

- What type of head injury do you suspect has occurred?
- Do you suspect that the brain injury is mild, moderate, or severe? Is the injury considered to be life threatening?
- How will the brain injury be evaluated and the severity of the injury be determined?
- What does TBI diagnosis involve?
- What types of diagnostic tests and imaging tests will be performed?
- What do these tests involve?
- What does a neurological exam involve?
- What is the Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS)?
- What does the GCS score indicate?
- What area(s) of the brain are affected by this injury?
- Is the brain damage focal or diffuse?

- What are the usual stages of progression associated with this type of head injury?
- Does this type of brain damage usually cause a cascade of events in the brain?
- What are the immediate effects of this type of brain damage?
- What complications are associated with this type of brain injury?
- How likely is bleeding and/or swelling in the brain or increased intracranial pressure (ICP) following this type of injury?
- What are the common signs of these complications?
- What should I do if complication symptoms develop? **Telephone number to call:**
- What are the most common long-term effects associated with this type of brain damage?
- What secondary complications can develop following this type of head injury?
- What are the common signs of these late complications?
- What should I do if additional symptoms or signs of secondary complications develop?  
**Telephone number to call:**

### **Questions to Ask Your Doctor about TBI Treatment**

- What treatments are available for this type of traumatic brain injury?
- What are the benefits and disadvantages associated with these TBI treatments?
- What is the usual prognosis for patients who sustain this type of head injury?
- What does acute treatment for this type of TBI involve?
- Might surgery be necessary? If so, what does this procedure involve?
- Will intracranial pressure need to be monitored? If so, how will this be done?
- What is a shunt? Might this be necessary to control intracranial pressure?

