

Did you know March is Brain Injury Awareness Month?

Millions of brain injuries happen each year. A traumatic brain injury, or TBI, occurs when a bump, blow, or jolt from an external force hits the head affecting the brain functioning. An external force may be from a fall, a motor vehicle accident, or an assault. A moderate to severe brain injuries may impact the way a person thinks, acts, and feels. There are different types of brain injuries classified by the presenting symptoms. TBI classifications include concussion or mild TBI, moderate TBI, and severe TBI.

A **concussion** is generally non-life threatening; however medical consultation is important. Symptoms of a concussion may include headache, brief loss of consciousness, vomiting, lethargy or increased tiredness, and memory loss.

A **moderate TBI** is classified as loss of consciousness **up to 24 hours**. Medical consultation must take place. Medical imaging is needed to identify brain injury.

A **severe TBI** is classified as loss of consciousness for **more than 24 hours**. Medical consultation must take place. Medical imaging is needed to identify the extent of brain injury. A severe TBI often results in long-term symptoms.

Being seen by a medical professional after a head injury is important. Symptoms of brain injury may show up immediately after the injury or develop over time. Common symptoms include:

Headache	Fatigue	Seizures	Nausea
Poor sleep	Trouble walking	Sound sensitivity	Vision problems
Balance problems	Changes to swallowing	Memory problems	Speech issues
Anxiety	Irritability	Aggression	Impulsivity

What can you do to prevent brain injury?

1. Wear your seat belt and assist others if they need assistance applying their seatbelt. While transferring a wheelchair individual care givers must ensure a seat belt is used and wheelchair safely secured during the ride.
2. Wear your helmet when riding a bike or scooter and assist others if they need assistance applying their helmet.
3. If you are at risk of falls, work with your healthcare provider to develop a fall protocol.
4. If you use medical equipment to assist with turning, repositioning, or lifting, ensure all individuals are trained on how to use equipment properly and know what to do in the event the equipment is not functioning.
5. If you live in a multilevel home, look at ways to reduce falls from the window. This may include arranging furniture away from windows or applying window stops.



6. If there are firearms in your home, safely store them.

If you work with individuals who've experienced a brain injury, please remember the following:

1. The person with the injury is first, not the injury.
2. No two brain injuries are identical.
3. The effects of a brain injury may be mild to severe and each person experiencing them differently.
4. The effects of the injury depend on many factors, including the cause, location, and severity of the injury.
5. **Brain injury symptoms may be immediate or present later. Be aware of symptoms and know when to provide first aid and seek emergency medical treatment.**

If you would like to learn more about brain injuries and access resources, please visit the following websites:

1. [Traumatic Brain Injury and Concussion](#)- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
2. [Traumatic Brain Injuries](#)- Washington State Department of Health.
3. [Head Trauma- First Aid](#).
4. [Brain Injury Alliance of Washington](#).
5. [Washington TBI Council](#)- DSHS' Aging and Long-Term Support Administration.
6. [Care Provider Bulletins and Information](#)- DSHS' Developmental Disabilities Administration.
 - a. Advance Care Planning
 - b. Fall Prevention
 - c. Head Injury
 - d. Health Care Advocacy
 - e. When to Call 9-1-1