

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)— Effects and Intervention



Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is caused by an impact to the head from direct blows or sudden movements in other parts of the body, such as severe shaking. TBI can result in physical, cognitive, behavioral, or emotional difficulties. Injuries can range from minor to extremely severe and call for various levels of intervention and treatment.

People with TBI may experience short-term memory loss, have difficulty concentrating or paying attention, become easily disoriented, have impaired judgment, experience headaches or migraines, have slurred speech, experience seizures, become fatigued, depressed, or easily agitated, or experience increased anxiety and impulsive behaviors.

Occupational therapists can help people who have sustained a TBI. The type and duration of intervention depend on how severe the injury.

What can an occupational therapist do?

- **Evaluate** the client engaging in daily activities at home, such as dressing and eating; at work; and during leisure activities, and facilitate the resumption of those activities.
- **Establish** and restore (depending on the age of the client) endurance and strength so that a person with TBI can bathe, dress, and feed himself or herself.
- **Help** the client minimize overstimulation and confusion in his or her environment.
- **Help** the client perform simple tasks that are meaningful to the person's life.
- **Implement** weekly checklists of household chores.
- **Recommend** equipment that can aid a person in performing daily life activities with greater independence, such as a tub or shower seat to allow

bathing without standing when the client has poor balance and grab bars for greater safety when getting in or out of a tub or shower.

- **Teach** a person with TBI to compensate for problems with thinking, such as memory impairments.

What can families and friends of a person with a TBI do?

- **Become** educated about the recovery process of a family member with a TBI.
- **Provide** long-term support to a family member with a TBI.
- **Learn** techniques to help the person with a TBI manage cognitive and physical problems.
- **Help** the person adapt his or her home to accommodate the effects of a TBI.

Need more information?

A person with traumatic brain injury and his or her family likely will need long-term assistance. If you would like to consult an occupational therapist, they are available through most hospitals, medical centers, and community clinics.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants are trained in helping adults and children with a broad range of issues in addition to traumatic brain injury, such as arthritis, stroke, and mood disorders. Practitioners also help clients develop wellness techniques that may prevent injury and disease.