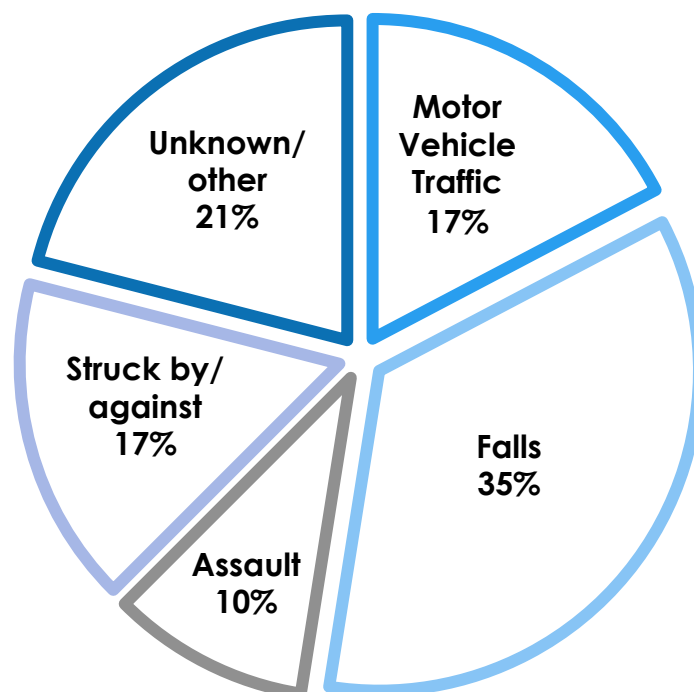


What is a traumatic brain injury (TBI)?

What happens in a TBI?

- A blow to the head can occur in many ways, such as in a car accident, fall, bicycle accident, assault, and sports injury.
- Sometimes the skull can break or the brain can be shaken around inside the skull, which can cause bruises to the brain or *hematomas*.
- The brain can swell after an injury, which can take up to six months to go down.
- Depending on the injury, a TBI can cause changes in thinking, smelling, seeing, talking, feelings, and how you move your body.
- **Re-injury** to the brain during recovery from brain injury can be fatal.

Common Causes of TBI



How will I feel? What can I do about it?

Symptoms you may experience:

- Poor attention/concentration, irritability, depression, anxiety, trouble thinking, altered judgment, forgetfulness, repeating yourself, trouble finding your words, slowed thinking, and difficulty with planning, and organization
- Problems with sleep, running out of energy more quickly, headaches, sensitivity to light or noise, ringing in ears, blurred vision, dizziness, difficulty with balance, and poor sense of taste and smell

What can you do?

- **Pace yourself.** Take frequent breaks and naps and avoid tasks that need a lot of physical and mental energy. You may need to take time off work or school until you feel better. If naps interfere with nighttime sleep, try limiting how long you nap. You can also try to take naps earlier in the day.
- **Avoid alcohol and drugs as it can make symptoms worse and prolong recovery time.** Limit caffeine to no more than two cups of coffee, tea, or cola.
- Know that it is okay to ask for help, and share your feelings with others.
- **Do one thing at a time**, limit noise and distractions, don't be hard on yourself, write important things down, and use a calendar to help you remember appointments and important dates.
- Speak with your hospital staff about any questions and concerns you may have.
- Try to go to sleep at the same time every night. Do relaxing things before bedtime, such as a warm bath/shower. Don't watch TV or use the computer right before you go to sleep.
- Take pain relievers for headaches as directed by your doctor. Take prescribed and over the counter medications as directed by your doctor.
- Try to do things that make you happy and reduce stress.
- Eat healthy meals and exercise regularly. Stop exercising if your symptoms, such as headache or dizziness, get worse.
- Remember that recovery is different for everyone and that it takes time.

When will I get better?

- Most people with mild TBIs fully recover in the weeks and months after being injured. Most symptoms go away on their own with little treatment
- Most people with moderate to severe TBIs continue to experience symptoms and may need help returning to activities.
- The greatest amount of neurological recovery occurs in the first 6 months after your injury and it can continue for up to 2 years. After this, TBI survivors can still recover as they learn to work around their difficulties.
- The **Rancho Level of Cognitive Functioning** provides a good description of what to expect with cognitive recovery. You can view a description at this website: www.rancho.org/research/RanchoLevelsOfCognitiveFunctioning.pdf



Free Support & Education Group:

Bring your family and friends!

When: 1st Thursday every month 3:30-4:45pm

Where: SFGH Bldg. 30 Medical Library, First Floor, Room 1011001 Potrero Ave. San Francisco, CA 94110

Neurosurgery Patient Helpline: 415-206-4093

What do I need to watch out for? How can I prevent this from happening again?

Call 911 or go to the nearest hospital if you:

- Have a **severe headache** and it does not go away after taking medication
- Are **vomiting (throwing up)** and cannot stop, and/or cannot keep your balance
- Have a **seizure**, and/or have **clear liquid or blood** coming from your ears or nose
- **Cannot stay awake** or wake up a loved one
- Are suddenly **unable to move body parts, see, and talk**

Safety:

- **ALWAYS** wear a seatbelt in a car
- **ALWAYS** wear a helmet while on a bicycle, motorcycle, contact sports, skating, skateboarding
- Use proper child safety seats
- **AVOID alcohol and drugs**
- **NEVER** drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs

Falls Prevention:

- Use the handrails for safety
- Use enough lighting
- Place bars on windows to prevent someone from falling
- Sit on safe stools and chairs
- Do not place items in walkways

Firearm Safety:

- Store guns unloaded and keep in a locked cabinet
- Store ammunition separate from guns



Follow Up Care and Support

TBI MEDICAL SERVICES:

**San Francisco TBI Network
Janet Pomeroy Center**
207 Skyline Blvd.
San Francisco, CA 94132
415-665-4100 ext. 1782
www.janetpomeroy.org

**Brain & Spinal Injury Center at University
of California, San Francisco General
Hospital & Trauma Center**
1001 Potrero Ave. Bldg. #1, Room 101
San Francisco CA, 94110
415-206-8300
www.brainandspinalinjury.org

Brain Injury Network of the Bay Area
1132 Magnolia Ave.
Larkspur, CA 94939
415-461-6771
www.mbin.org

OTHER RESOURCES:

Brain Injury Association of America
800-444-6443
www.biausa.org

**Traumatic Brain Injury
Resource Directory**
www.tbi-sci.org/tbird

Seizure Tracker
www.seizuretracker.com

TBI Survival Guide
www.tbiguide.com

RECOVERY & CAREGIVER RESOURCES:

SFGH Trauma Recovery Center
2727 Mariposa St. Suite 100
San Francisco, CA 94110
415-437-3000
www.traumarecoverycenter.org

Family Caregiver Alliance
690 Market St. Suite 600
San Francisco, CA 94104
415-434-3388
www.caregiver.org

Brain Trauma Foundation
212-772-0608
www.braintrauma.org

**TBI Skills Group: John Adams
Community College**
415-561-1005

FINANCIAL SERVICES:

Victim Compensation Fund
800-777-9229
www.boc.ca.gov

Victim Witness Assistance Center
850 Bryan St. Room 320
San Francisco, CA 94103
415-553-9044

State Disability Insurance (SDI)
1-800-480-3287

Employment Development Dept.
1-800-300-5616

Bay Area Legal Aid
415-354-6360