

## What is a Brain Injury

An Estimated 5.3 Million Americans – a little more than 2 percent of the U. S. population – currently live with disabilities resulting from a traumatic brain injury

**Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)** – an insult to the brain, not of degenerative or congenital nature caused by an external physical force that may produce a diminished or altered state of consciousness, which results in an impairment of cognitive abilities or physical functioning. It can also result in the disturbance of behavioral or emotional functioning.

**Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)** – injury to the brain which is not hereditary, cognitive or degenerative that has occurred after birth. (includes anoxia, aneurysms, infections to the brain and stroke).

## What A Brain Injury Survivor May Experience

To many, Brain Injury Survivors appear to be the same. Their appearance may look fine; however, internally things are all mixed up.

Every individual who experiences a brain injury is affected differently. Some of the difficulties are:

*Physical Consequences* (which affect the body differently) including:

- Seizures of all types
- Difficulty in walking, balance problems
- Muscle weakness or stiffness
- Speech, hearing or visional impairments
- Headaches, migraines and other body and head pain
- Fatigue, increased need for sleep
- Balance problems

*Cognitive deficits* (which affect the way we know and understand what is happening around us)

- Short and Long Term memory loss
- Slowed ability to process information
- Attention and concentration problems
- Learning and remembering
- Following directions
- Planning and organizing
- Communicating, reading and writing
- Spatial disorientation

*Emotional and behavioral difficulties* (which affects the way we feel about ourselves and how we respond to other people)

- Self-centeredness and lowered self-esteem
- Lack of energy, restlessness or irritability
- Decreased motivation & difficulty sleeping
- Mood swings, periods of laughing or crying
- Inappropriate behavior

## Who is Impacted

Everyone is affected. This disease does not discriminate, Mothers, Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, Friends... everyone.

Brain Injury is a leading cause of death and disability among children, young adults and elderly adults. Each year 1.5 million Americans sustain a traumatic brain injury (TBI) which amounts to more than 4,000 people each day.

Brain Injury claims more than 50,000 lives and leaves between 80,000 and 90,000 individuals with lifelong disabilities each year. There are at least 5.3 million Americans living with a disability as a result of a brain injury. The emotional toll is immeasurable.

These numbers are even higher as many people are not even included in the statistics. Many individuals go unreported since they are not admitted into a hospital and many more go undiagnosed and untreated.

The majority of brain injuries result from motor vehicle accidents, falls, sports injuries, and violence (gun shot, beatings). Other causes include anoxia (lack of oxygen to the brain during surgery, drug overdose or near drowning), stroke, tumors, and Lyme disease.

## How You Can Help

Most Brain Injury Survivors either don't realize they need help or are intimidated and afraid to ask.

Here are a few suggestions on how the community can help Brain Injury Survivors:

- Grocery Shopping
- Errands (pick up medications,etc)
- Laundry
- Cooking and preparing meals
- Handyman work around the house
- Lawn/yard maintenance
- Taking in the mail
- Helping sort through bills
- Reviewing insurance policies or other important documents
- Cleaning house
- Car maintenance
- Recycling
- Returning calls and sending cards
- Transportation
- Coming along to medical appointments
- Child care
- Providing companionship

## Resources

Brain Injury Association of New Jersey

<http://www.bianj.org/>

Brain Injury Association of America

<http://www.biausa.org/>

# Brain Injury Survivor's Brochure

