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brain injury

Q&A

What is acquired brain injury?

Acquired brain injury refers to a traumatic or non-traumatic brain injury that occurs after birth. Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is caused by an external force. Non-traumatic brain injury is brain damage that occurs as a result of disease or illness.

What are the leading causes of brain injury?

Traumatic brain injury is most often the result of motor vehicle or bicycle accidents, falls, sporting accidents, violence or abuse. Non-traumatic brain injury can be caused by seizure disorders, tumors, meningitis, encephalitis, or other illnesses and diseases.

How prevalent is traumatic brain injury?

Traumatic brain injury is the leading cause of death and disability among America's youth. According to the Brain

Injury Association of America, more people experience traumatic brain injury each year than breast cancer, HIV/AIDS, multiple sclerosis, and spinal cord injuries combined. Every 21 seconds, one person in the United States sustains a brain injury. Traumatic brain injury impacts approximately one million children annually, with 165,000 requiring hospitalization. Adolescents, young adults, and the elderly are at the greatest risk for traumatic brain injury.

Disabilities caused by traumatic brain injury may last a lifetime. Currently, more than five million Americans are living with disabilities caused by brain injury.

What are the most common symptoms of a brain injury?

Brain injury may affect an individual's ability to function well at work, school, home, and in other settings, causing difficulties in the following areas:

- **Cognitive:** memory loss, organizational difficulties, speech and/or communication problems, difficulty in reasoning and problem solving
- **Behavioral:** impulsiveness, aggression, and decline in social skills
- **Physical:** impairment or changes in vision, hearing, coordination, balance and muscle tone

How can brain injury be prevented?

Children should be given instruction on street safety at an early age ("stop, look, and listen before you cross the street") and be required to wear properly fitted helmets during many sporting and recreational activities, including:

- Riding bicycles, tricycles, scooters, and skateboards, and while rollerblading, skiing, and snowboarding;
- Playing football, baseball, hockey, soccer and other impact sports.

In addition, small children riding as

passengers in trailers or bicycle seats should also wear helmets. Riders should use trails and other designated areas for biking, and avoid busy streets.

Children who are passengers in automobiles should be in car seats or seat belts, depending upon their age and weight.

Children under 12 years of age and/or weigh less than 100 pounds should ride in the back seat of a motor vehicle.

Can people recover from a brain injury?

Individuals who receive prompt diagnosis and treatment for a brain injury often make great progress in regaining skills following a trauma or illness. Treatment should include rehabilitation and special education services through a multidisciplinary team of professionals, including licensed psychologists, physical and occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, behavioral specialists and teachers trained specifically in the treatment of brain injury. Residential services can also be useful for individuals with brain injury who need extra care.

Additional resources include:

- ▶ Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts
www.biama.org
- ▶ Brain Injury Association of America
www.biausa.org
- ▶ National Institutes of Health
www.ninds.nih.gov

www.mayinstitute.org

May Institute is a nonprofit organization that provides educational, rehabilitative, and behavioral healthcare services to individuals with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities, brain injury, mental illness, and behavioral health needs. Since its founding more than 55 years ago, May Institute has evolved into an award-winning national network that serves thousands of individuals and their families every year at nearly 200 service locations across the country. The Institute operates a specialized school for children and adolescents with brain injury; it is located in Brockton, Mass.

For more information, contact May Institute at 800-778-7601 or info@mayinstitute.org.