

Traumatic Brain Injury in Early Childhood

What is a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)?

A TBI is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts normal brain function. A TBI may range from “mild” to “severe.”

TBI Annually in Missouri (2013)

16,065 Events	391 Died
7,783 From Falls	1,115 Transferred to Acute Care
2,944 From Motor Vehicles	755 Transferred to SNF/ICF/Hospice

Age groups at highest risk: 0-4, 15-24, and 85+

Falls/jumps: leading cause of TBI in the 0-4 and 85+ age groups. Source: The Public Health Burden of Traumatic Brain Injuries in Missouri, March 2007

Considerations for screening: Educator Resource 3: Health History Accidents: car accident, near drowning or suffocation, stopped breathing for one minute or longer or sustained a blow to the head? Falls: from a height greater than 18 inches (i.e., fallen down stairs, rolled off a changing table, fallen from playground equipment, fallen while climbing or fallen when riding a tricycle/bike/scooter) resulting in fall or fall onto an object that resulted in a blow to the head? Emergency Room: Has your child ever visited a doctor’s office or emergency room because of a loss of consciousness or hit on the head? Symptoms or Sickness: Has your child ever had a seizure or loss of consciousness?

Educator Resource 4: Considerations for documentation Incident Reporting Describe When and How Injury Occurred. Include cause and force of the hit to the head, type of surface or object struck and location on head where the blow occurred. Signs/Symptoms: Check any changes observed following the blow to the head.

Research

There is some research available about outcomes for children who sustain a traumatic brain injury prior to age five. This is an area that needs further investigation. Still, the research shows that parents of a child who has a TBI need to have long-term support in creating an environment of warm parental responsiveness that promotes behavior regulation within the child.

A study in the Journal of Pediatrics reported that a majority of children treated for head trauma in emergency room departments had teen parents. The researcher’s recommendations included more education on safety and supervision in teen parenting programs. Journal of Pediatrics www.jpeds.com

In studies by Dr. Shari Wade, it was found that parents of children who suffer from TBI often cope with the associated stress in different ways. Respecting those different coping skills can help couples maintain. (Caregiving functioning following early childhood TBI. Do Moms and Dads Respond Differently? Shari Wade Neurorehabilitation 01/2010; 27(1): 63-72)