

TBI PREVENTION TIPS

From the CDC National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

(Unless otherwise noted, the following safety tips have been adapted from the Brain Injury Association of America fact sheets.)

Motor vehicles are the leading cause of TBI-related hospitalizations (Thurman 2001). Below are some safety tips for driving or riding in motor vehicles:

- Always wear a seat belt.
- Properly secure or buckle children into child safety seats appropriate for their ages and weights every time you travel.
- Properly secure or buckle children under 12 in the back seat to avoid air bag injuries.
- Never drive after using alcohol or drugs.
- Do not ride in a car with a driver who is drug- or alcohol-impaired.
- Prevent others from driving while impaired with alcohol or drugs.

Sports-and-recreation-related TBIs are an important public health problem (Thurman 1998). Follow the tips below to make sports and recreation activities safer for you and your children.

- Always wear helmets when
 - riding a bike, motorcycle, scooter, or skateboard;
 - in-line skating and roller-skating;
 - skiing or snowboarding;
 - horseback riding.
- Always wear helmets during the following sports activities:

- Football
- Ice hockey
- Batting and running the bases in baseball and softball
- When children play at a playground:
 - Check the quality of playground equipment and the surfacing below. The surface below equipment should be shock absorbing material such as wood products, pea gravel, sand, or rubber products. The surface should be approximately 12 inches deep.
 - Make sure there is adult supervision.

Thurman D. The epidemiology and economics of head trauma. In: Miller L, Hayes R, editors. *Head Trauma: Basic, Preclinical, and Clinical Directions*. New York (NY): Wiley and Sons; 2001.

Prevention Resources

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

Mailstop K65
4770 Buford Highway NE
Atlanta, GA 30341-3724
Phone: 770.488.1506
Fax: 770.488.1667
Email: OHCINFO@cdc.gov
Website: www.cdc.gov/ncipc

ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation

Thinkfirst Foundation works to prevent brain, spinal cord, and other traumatic injuries by educating of individuals, community leaders, and policy makers.

5550 Meadowbrook Drive
Suite 110
Rolling Meadows, IL 60008
Phone: 847-290-8600
Fax: 847-290-9005
Email: thinkfirst@thinkfirst.org
Website: www.thinkfirst.org

HOW TO TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT BRAIN INJURY

After a relative or friend has a brain injury, life can be especially hard for children. They have a hard time understanding what has happened, how to cope, and how to help. Parents often say that they have trouble explaining injuries to their children. Here are some ideas of ways you can explain brain injury to your child after one of their family members or friends is injured -

★ The brain is like a command station of a space ship. To understand brain injury, think about what would happen if the command station were hit by a meteorite. If a meteorite hits the command station, the command station may not be able to control the direction the ship travels or what the ship does. The brain controls how the whole body works like the command station controls the ship. After the brain is hurt, it may send out the wrong signals to the body or send out no signals at all. A person with a brain injury may have trouble walking, talking, hearing, or seeing. They may even need a machine to help them breathe.

★ Most of the time, a broken bone will heal and be good as new. A hurt brain is different. The person with the injury may look the same, but usually they will act different than before. The person may walk slowly or use a wheelchair to get around. They may get tired easily and sleep a lot. Paying attention may be harder for them. They may not remember what you say to them. They may have trouble understanding a joke or telling a story. They might say or do things that are strange or embarrassing. They may get angry more easily and have temper problems.

★ The person might be upset because of the changes caused by their injury. There may be things that the person with a brain injury cannot do anymore, like playing soccer or going swimming. If other people laugh or treat the person differently than before, the person may feel

sad and cry easily. Sometimes a person with a brain injury will be very angry about the injury and might get mad and yell a lot.

- * A bad cut may take a few days or weeks to get better. A broken leg may take six weeks or longer to heal. Getting better after a brain injury takes a long time, even longer than getting better from a broken leg. Getting better may take months or even years. Sometimes people with a brain injury have problems for the rest of their lives. Still, they can feel better and learn new ways to do things.
- * Brain injury changes people, sometimes a little, sometimes a lot. You might be confused by the changes you see. Still, you love and care about the person anyway. Even though they might seem sad or mad sometimes, remember that they still love and care about you too. Try to remember that the

changes are caused by a brain injury. Then the changes will be easier to accept.

- * Explaining these points to your child may help him or her better understand what has happened to their family member or friend. Your child may feel better if he or she understands what is going on and be less scared. Talking about the injury also opens the lines of communication and lets them know it is okay to talk to you about it.
- * The National Resource Center recently published a book entitled, *A Kid's Guide to Brain Injury*. The book helps teach children about brain injury and its effects, and the content is geared for children ages 6 to 14. If you are interested in purchasing this book, contact the National Resource Center to request a catalog at (804) 828-9055 or visit the website at www.neuro.pmr.vcu.edu.

Laura Taylor and
Jeff Kreutzer

(What to Tell... – continued from page 1)

- Keep your answers short, simple, and to the point.
- Your family, close friends, doctors, and therapists may have good ideas about ways to respond to people's questions. Tell them about what you like to say, and get their reactions.
- Many people find it helpful to role play their answers with close friends and family to prepare ahead of time.
- Talk to other survivors about how they deal with difficult questions.
- Disclose the most personal information only to people you really trust like family members, close friends, doctors, and therapists.
- Remember that family, friends, and neighbors may be asking be-

cause they care and want to help. Let them know you appreciate their concern.

- When you would rather not talk about your injury, for whatever reason, you can always respond gracefully. For example, you can say, "I appreciate your concern for me. I'd rather talk about that later."

Here are some ways you can respond to specific questions -

- 💡 *What happened?* -- I was in an accident a while ago.
- 💡 *What type of medical care do you need?* -- I was in the hospital for some time. (or) I see doctors for my injury every now and then.
- 💡 *How much longer will you need treatment?* -- My doctors are

MEMORY-WISE

REMEMBERING PHONE NUMBERS



- ☞ Chunk phone numbers into 2 and 3 digit groups. For example, the number 457-2291 becomes: four hundred fifty seven; twenty two; ninety one. Now you have 3 short numbers to recall instead of one long number.
- ☞ Practice entering the number onto an imaginary telephone key pad. For older folks, pretending to dial a rotary phone works well, too. Now you are learning not just with your "hearing," but also with your "sight" and "touch." 
- ☞ Say the number over and over and over again. Repeat. No kidding! When you think you've about learned the number, stop. Go get a drink of water or something. Now test yourself. Try to remember the number. Did you recall the number correctly? Practice going longer and longer before re-checking your recall.

helping me recover as quickly as possible.

- 💡 *What are your current symptoms?* -- I tend to get tired easily. (or) I have to pay attention to things more carefully now.
- 💡 *How are you doing now?* -- I'm getting better with each passing day.
- 💡 *When will you be able to come back to work?* -- I'm waiting to get a little better and then I'll decide. (or) We're working on a plan right now; I hope to know soon.

Remember there's no need to tell people everything about your injury. Only give detailed information to people you trust who care.

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