

# students with traumatic brain injury

## What is a traumatic brain injury (TBI)?

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is a head injury that occurs when the brain is forcefully struck by an object. There are two main types of TBI:

- **Closed Brain Injury:** This happens when an object hits the head but does not break the skull. These injuries are usually mild to moderate and can result from car accidents, bicycle or pedestrian accidents, sports injuries, falls, or repeated blows to the head (such as in cases of child abuse).
- **Penetrating Brain Injury:** This occurs when an object breaks through the skull and pierces the brain, such as in a gunshot wound. This is the most severe type of TBI and often requires long-term medical care and rehabilitation.

### Treatment

Treatment depends on the type and severity of the injury. Imaging tests like X-rays, CT scans, and MRIs help determine the best course of care. Rehabilitation may include physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech-language therapy, cognitive rehabilitation, emotional, behavioral, and psychiatric support.

## How can traumatic brain injury affect a student at school?

Children with TBI may face academic and behavioral challenges that vary depending on the severity and location of the injury. Children with traumatic brain injury may struggle in the following areas:

- **Academic:** vision and hearing problems, trouble with attention, concentration, and organization, slower processing speed, memory issues, impaired judgement and confusion, difficulty with reading, writing, and math, speech challenges, trouble with abstract concepts, cognitive fatigue
- **Social/Emotional:** anxiety, frustration, aggression, depression, impulsivity, isolation, difficulty making and keeping friends, low self-esteem, poor motivation, irritability, fear
- **Physical:** difficulty with gross motor skills and fine motor skills, difficulty with daily living task (dressing, bathing, eating), inability to drive

## How can schools support students with a traumatic brain injury?

### Academic

- Start academic interventions under **Section 504** or **IDEA** (Other Health Impairment).
- Conduct evaluations for **speech, OT/PT, vision/hearing, assistive technology**, as needed.
- Allow **extra time** for assignments, projects, quizzes, and tests.
- Assign a **manageable workload** focused on quality over quantity.
- Use **organizational tools** such as checklists, planners, and visual schedules.

- Use **multi-sensory teaching methods** (visual, auditory, tactile) and repetition.
- Provide **printed copies of notes**, highlighted materials, and recorded lessons.
- Offer **preferential seating** to reduce distractions.
- Provide **assistive technology** (computer, tablet, word processor) for note-taking and writing.
- Excuse **tardiness and absences** for treatment or hospital stays.
- Waive **missed assignments** when possible to reduce stress.

### Social and Emotional

- **Allow hats or scarves** for hair loss and provide peer sensitivity training when appearance changes occur.
- Provide **counseling or emotional support** as needed.
- Implement behavior intervention plans when needed.
- Limit **competitive activities** to reduce stress and prevent discouragement.
- Create opportunities for **academic and social success** and highlight the student's strengths to build confidence.
- With parent consent, **educate peers** to promote understanding.

### Physical

- **Educate staff** about the student's condition to reduce misunderstandings and support inclusion.
- Adjust **physical activities** based on the student's tolerance.
- Monitor for signs of **fatigue and distress**.

### More Resources

- **National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke**  
[ninds.nih.gov/](https://ninds.nih.gov/)
- **Nemours Kids Health**  
[kidshealth.org](https://kidshealth.org)

### SCHOOL SERVICES

For more information, visit [childrens.com/school-services](https://childrens.com/school-services)

