

OHIO SUICIDE PREVENTION FOUNDATION

Traumatic Brain Injury and Suicide Risk

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has estimated that annually, about 1.5 million Americans experience a traumatic brain injury (TBI).¹ The severity of these injuries can range from a mild concussion to coma or even death, and many people who experience a TBI may never seek treatment. But recent studies have shown that TBIs, no matter how severe, can impact an individual for the rest of their life – leading to longterm mental health conditions and suicide.

What is a traumatic brain injury?

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a disruption of normal brain function caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head commonly from concussions, unexpected falls, car accidents, or being shaken violently. Brain injury also occurs from strokes and other instances when the brain is deprived of oxygen, like drug overdose. Although the extent of injuries are unique with each situation and each person, it is important to follow up with care and be aware of the possible short-term and long-term impacts.

The connection between TBIs and mental health/suicide

The effects of brain injuries often impact mental health because they damage the parts of the brain that allow us to manage our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Even years after an incident, people with a TBI can suffer from a variety of ongoing health problems including chronic illness, depression, mania, emotional outbursts, and cognitive issues such as impaired memory, poor concentration, and difficulty with problem-solving. These conditions can make it more challenging to complete daily tasks and succeed at school or work. This can impact self-esteem and make many TBI survivors feel overwhelmed, isolated, and alone and can lead to an increased risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

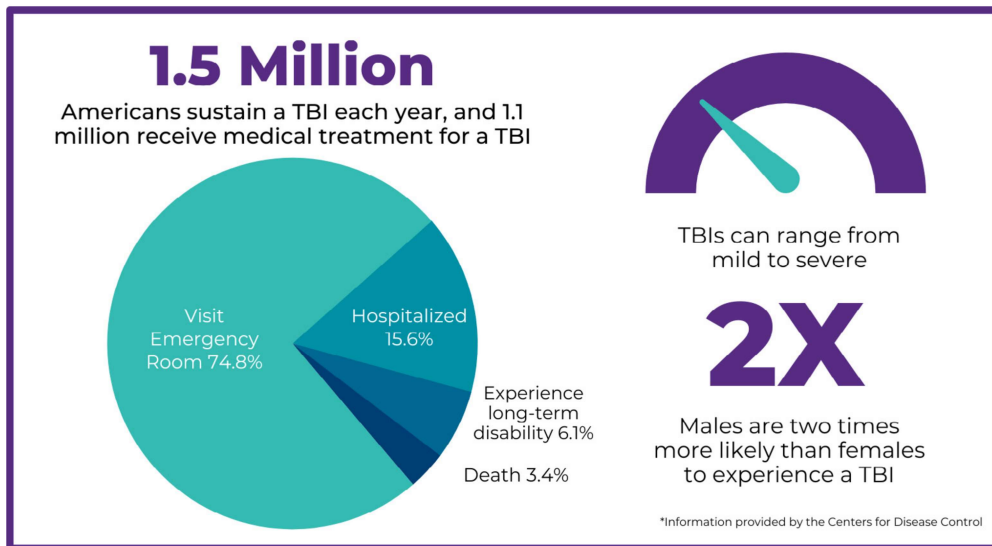
New research indicates that TBI survivors are at greater risk of suicide. One study found that suicide risk is particularly high during the first six months following an injury, making it even more important for TBI survivors to have access to psychological help and other resources following an injury.²

Warning Signs

Although the recovery process is different for everyone, there are certain signs to be aware of that a TBI survivor may benefit from additional help, including:

- Not participating in activities that you enjoy or spending time with friends and family (isolation/withdrawing)
- Not performing activities of daily living (showering, grooming, cooking meals, etc.)
- Feeling hopeless or pre-occupied with the idea of death
- Experiencing self-destructive behaviors (drinking alcohol, drug use, recklessness)

If you or someone you love is experiencing a crisis, call or text the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988.



Additional Resources

The Brain Injury Association of Ohio
www.biaoh.org

Ohio Brain Injury Program - The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center
www.ohiobraininjury.org

Brain Injury Association of America
www.biausa.org

CDC Injury Center
www.cdc.gov

References

- 1 The National Library of Medicine. "Traumatic Brain Injury." 2022. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov
- 2 JAMA Network. "Association Between Traumatic Brain Injury and Risk of Suicide." 2018. www.jamanetwork.com

Helpful steps

If you suspect someone needs help, don't wait. Contact your primary care physician, a neuropsychologist, or other medical professional so that they can screen for depression, anxiety, and other mental health conditions. Other helpful steps include:

- Taking medication as prescribed
- Meeting regularly with a licensed therapist or support group
- Creating a safety plan and sharing it with people you trust
- Creating a routine for yourself
- Practicing healthy habits including self-care, exercise, and good nutrition

This information was created in partnership with the Brain Injury Association of Ohio. BIAOH is here to be the voice of help, hope, and healing for the brain injury community. They work closely with doctors and hospitals throughout Ohio and offer resources for people including a helpline, virtual and in-person support groups, and education. Learn more about BIAOH by visiting their website: www.biaoh.org.

ABOUT OHIO SUICIDE PREVENTION FOUNDATION

OSPF gives hope to those in crisis, strength to those in the struggle, and comfort to those in grief. OSPF is a non-profit organization that works tirelessly to help all of Ohio's communities reduce the risk of suicide. Our work includes supporting those impacted by suicide, raising awareness of mental health issues, and coordinating community resources and evidence-based prevention strategies across the state.



(614) 429-1528 / OhioSPF.org

