

## About Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

A blow to the head can disrupt the normal function of the brain. This can occur even when there is no visible damage. Concussion is the most common form of brain injury.

Often dubbed, “the hidden disability,” TBI symptoms can be missed or misinterpreted by the individual, family members and even doctors. People may look fine even though they’re acting or feeling differently.

Every brain injury is different because the brain is very complex. TBI can adversely affect many functions we take for granted every day, including speech, vision, balance, logic and memory.



**After a brain injury/concussion, be alert for symptoms that may not show up for days or even weeks after the injury. An adult should go to the emergency room, see their doctor or call 911 if he/she experiences any of the following:**

- Trouble answering simple questions
- A headache that gets worse even after medication
- Changes in personality or behavior
- Pupils (black center of the eye) are different sizes
- Stumbling or problems with balance
- Double vision, dizziness or slurred speech
- Seizures (convulsions)
- Blood or clear fluid from nose or ears
- Persistent vomiting

**If you answer YES to the following questions, talk to your doctor about getting help.**

- Has there been a personality change?
- Does the individual get angry for no reason?
- Does the individual get lost or easily confused?
- Does the individual have more trouble than usual making decisions?
- Is there a significant drop in performance (work, sports, social, etc.)?
- Are there problems in thinking processes (memory, concentration, learning, speaking or understanding)?

Be HeadSmart®, Seniors! is a project of



### Brain Injury Association of Florida, Inc.

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**www.biaf.org**

Working with community-based agencies and organizations to increase awareness of the risks and consequences of brain injury among Florida's older residents.



The mission of the Brain & Spinal Cord Injury Program (BSCIP) is to provide all eligible Florida residents who sustain a traumatic brain or spinal cord injury the opportunity to obtain the necessary services enabling them to return to their community.

## Be HeadSmart®, Seniors!

**Tips and information to help protect your greatest resource - your brain!**



## Brain Injury.

**IT'S THE LAST THING ON YOUR MIND...  
UNTIL IT'S THE ONLY THING.®**

### Brain Injury Association of Florida, Inc.

Be HeadSmart®, Seniors! Prevention Project

Sponsored by the Florida Department of Health  
Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program.

## The Be HeadSmart® Safety Checklist

Use this handy checklist to identify potential improvements to your home and your life.

### MY HOME

#### Stairways, Hallways and Entrances

- Stairs / stair coverings are in good repair.
- Handrails are sturdy and run the full length of stairways.
- Stairways, hallways and entrances are well lit indoors and out.
- Stairways, hallways and entrances are kept free of clutter.
- Sidewalks and walkways are level and free of cracks or holes.

#### Living Areas

- I can turn on a light in each room without having to walk through the dark.
- Nightlights are used, especially between the bed and bathroom.
- Cords and wires are not stretched across pathways or under rugs.
- Carpet, tile, and floorboards lie flat and are in good repair.
- I do not use loose rugs or unsecured mats in or around my home.
- Area rugs have non-slip backing or are secured with double-sided tape.
- Furniture is arranged to prevent tripping and pathways are kept clear.
- Work and storage areas are organized so they are within easy reach.
- There is always a phone within easy reach. Emergency numbers are posted.
- I always use a sturdy stepstool or ladder to reach high places - never a chair.

### MY HOME (continued)

#### Bathrooms

- Tubs and showers have a non-skid mat, decals, abrasive strips or non-slip surface.
- Sturdy grab bars or handrails are installed by the toilet and in tubs and showers.
- Tub seat, hand-held shower and/or raised toilet seat with arms are used if needed.
- Bathroom rugs have non-skid backing. Bathroom floors have a non-slip surface.

#### Bedroom

- I keep a working flashlight and telephone by the bed.
- There is a light switch or lamp within reach of the bed.
- The bed is at the proper height to allow easy access.

### MY LIFESTYLE

#### Getting Around

- I wear supportive, low-heeled, non-slip shoes - even at home.
- In wet weather I wear non-slip boots or shoes and avoid slippery surfaces.
- I pay attention to floors in public buildings, especially if they are waxed or wet.
- I am always aware of traffic and traffic signals when crossing the street.
- When getting out of a vehicle, I take my time, especially if the ground is uneven.
- If recommended by my health care provider, I use my cane, walking stick or walker.

### MY LIFESTYLE (continued)

#### Driving

- I have completed a safe driving class to keep my skills sharp.
- I avoid driving at night, and take frequent rest stops on long trips.
- I ALWAYS wear my seat belt and insist my passengers do, too.
- I keep a safe distance between my car and the car in front of me.
- I use my turn signals to let drivers and pedestrians know what I intend to do.

#### Health / In General

- My vision is checked on a regular basis.
- I wear sunglasses on sunny days.
- I have reviewed my medications with my doctor or pharmacist and discussed possible side effects or interactions.
- My medications are clearly labeled and I take them only as prescribed.
- I have a system to help me remember to take the correct dosage each day.
- I eat nutritious, balanced meals with adequate calcium and vitamin D.
- I exercise regularly to maintain strength, balance and agility.
- I engage in activities that stimulate my mind and keep my brain active.
- I have an answering service or portable phone - I don't rush to answer the phone.
- I have arranged for daily contact with a friend or family member.
- I'm careful not to get up too quickly, especially after lying down, resting or eating.

Falls are the leading cause of brain injury in Americans age 60 and up.

Car crashes are a close second.

One in three adults over age 65 falls each year.

60% of these falls occur at home.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO REDUCE YOUR RISK OF SERIOUS INJURY?

### Identify Potential Dangers

Use the checklist to take an objective look at your home and your lifestyle.

### Make Improvements Where Needed

Don't underestimate how taking simple steps can help you avoid serious injury.

### Be HeadSmart®, Seniors!

You can **Make A Difference** in your life and the lives of your loved ones.

## MOST BRAIN INJURIES CAN BE PREVENTED.

## BE PROACTIVE ABOUT YOUR SAFETY.