

CHILDHOOD TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

What is Traumatic Brain Injury?

- Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is brain damage following a sudden severe blow to the head which leads to a breakdown in brain function
- Problems due to TBI can range from mild to severe
- Issues can appear immediately after the injury or develop over time

What is Affected by TBI?

- Physically: changes in sleep and eating patterns, delayed developmental milestones
- Sensory: problems with vision and hearing
- Cognitive: difficulty learning new things
- Behavioral: unpredictable or changeable moods, anxiety, impulsivity
- Swallowing: impairments of swallowing function

Effects on Language and Cognition

- After a TBI, effects on a child's language skills and cognitive skills will depend on their age at the time of the injury and the severity of the damage
- Common trends observed include:
 - Cognitive Skills
 - Impaired decision-making
 - Memory impairment
 - Language Skills
 - Poor reading and listening comprehension
 - Difficulty reading new words
 - Difficulty using language
 - Speech
 - Slurred speech
 - Poor control of volume, intonation and speaking rate



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Effects on Social Communication

- A TBI can impair behavior and thinking skills including reasoning and self-awareness, which can lead to social difficulties such as:
 - Talking too much or too little
 - Misunderstanding of body language and facial expressions
 - Standing too close or too far from the listener
 - Inappropriate physical contact
 - Poor eye contact or staring

Support for Children with TBI

- Use of written, visual (e.g. picture, gesture) and verbal supports
- Incorporation of group and partner activities
- Minimize environmental distractions
- Schedule breaks throughout the day in order to minimize fatigue and effects of attentional issues
- Provide additional time to complete classroom tasks
- Present new information in several different ways

Role of the Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)

- Evaluate the child's cognitive-communication skills and swallowing
- Recommend a treatment plan
- Work with the child to:
 - Improve language skills and social communication
 - Support organizational and problem-solving skills
 - Use an assistive device if necessary
 - Promote self-monitoring
 - Coordinate family services



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