

## Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Though not always visible and sometimes seemingly minor, TBI is complex. It can cause physical, cognitive, social and vocational changes that affect an individual permanently.

### Symptoms

Depending on the extent and location of the injury, symptoms caused by a brain injury vary widely. Some common results are:

- Seizures
- Loss of balance and coordination
- Difficulty with speech
- Limited concentration
- Memory loss
- Fatigue
- Loss of organizational and reasoning skills

### General Considerations

- A neuropsychological test battery is generally an accurate assessment of cognitive recovery after TBI. Conversely, a traditional intelligence test is not an accurate assessment of cognitive recovery following TBI. Students with brain injuries might perform well on brief, structured, one and two-step tasks but have significant deficits in learning, memory and executive functions. Often long term memory of information learned before the trauma remains intact.
- Recovery from TBI can be inconsistent, and a “plateau” is not evidence that functional improvement has ended.
- TBI can substantially alter self-perception. The person may recall abilities and personal management skills prior to the injury but be experientially unaware that these skills are no longer the same.
- When current performance fails to meet pre-disability performance expectations, depression often ensues.
- Common accommodations for students with TBI may include time extensions on exams, taped lectures, instructions presented in more than

one way, alternative plans to complete assignments, peer note takers, course substitutions, priority registration, consultations regarding study skills and strategies, use of memory strategies and alternative print formats.

- Typical manifestations are a limited ability to assess situational details, make plans and follow through. Class attendance may be irregular.

### **Instructional Strategies**

- Include a disability access statement in the course syllabus such as: “To obtain disability related accommodations and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact Access Services as soon as possible by calling 507-457-1465.”
- Keep instructions as brief and uncomplicated as possible. Repeat exactly without paraphrasing.
- Assist the student in finding effective peer note takers from the class.
- Allow the student to record lectures.
- Clearly define course requirements, the dates of exams, and when assignments are due. Provide advance notice of any changes.
- Present lecture information in both an auditory and visual formats (e.g. chalkboard, overheads, PowerPoint slides, handouts, etc.).
- Use more than one way to demonstrate or explain information.
- Have copies of the syllabus ready no less than six weeks prior to the beginning of the semester so textbooks can be converted to alternate formats.
- When teaching, state objectives, review previous lessons and summarize periodically.
- Allow time for clarification of directions and essential information.
- Provide study guides or review sheets for exams.
- Provide alternative ways for students to perform tasks (e.g., substituting oral for written work).

- Provide assistance with proofreading written work. Stress organization and ideas rather than mechanics when grading in-class writing assignments.
- Allow the use of spell-check and grammar-assistive devices when appropriate to the course.
- Allow use of memory aids on exams if it does not alter the content of what is being evaluated.
- When in doubt about how to assist the student, ask him or her as privately as possible without drawing attention to the student or the disability.

These guidelines were adapted from guidelines used by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Winona State University.