

# Brain Injury and Aging Health



Traumatic Brain Injuries may be missed or misdiagnosed in older adults because symptoms of TBI overlap with other medical conditions that are common among older adults, such as dementia.

75+



Nationally, people aged 75 years and older have the highest numbers and rates of TBI-related hospitalizations.

1 in 50



Over 1 in 50 Americans aged 75 or older experience a TBI-related ED visit, hospitalization or death.

3 Million



Each year, there are about 3 million emergency department visits due to falls in older adults. More than half will not tell their doctor.



cdc.gov

## BEST PRACTICE

People who work with older persons should:

- **SCREEN** for prior history of Brain Injury
- **ASSESS** Cognitive & Functional Impairment
- **EDUCATE** staff on Brain Injury
- **EDUCATE** the person about their Brain Injury
- **PROVIDE** and **TEACH** Accommodations
- **CONNECT** person served with Community Resources

## COMMON PROBLEMS

After Brain Injury, we often see problems with:

- Attention, memory and new learning
- Slowed speed of processing
- Organization, problem solving & impulsivity
- Irritability, frustration & agitation
- Balance, dizziness & headaches
- Poor awareness of deficits & difficulties
- Difficulty being flexible, poor self-monitoring

For an older adult who already has changes in abilities, look for a worsening in any of those areas after a fall or other injury.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

People who work with older persons may see:

- Looking uninterested because they cannot pay attention
- Appearance of defiance because they cannot remember the rules
- Slow to follow directions because they cannot process quickly
- Being argumentative because of irritability, anger and impulsivity
- Falling into things, often getting hurt
- Difficulty re-entering community because of cognitive changes
- Getting stuck on an idea or a way of doing something, does not recognize mistakes

STEADI is a fall prevention program of the CDC with user-friendly brochures to help identify and remove reasons for falling. [cdc.gov/steady/](https://www.cdc.gov/steady/)

# Common Accommodations for Brain Injury Challenges

Here are some common and simple accommodations:

## For the person:

- Working for shorter periods of time
- Getting rid of distractions around you, like noise or movement
- Taking notes (on paper, in a notebook, on a phone or computer)
- Using a phone to set timers to remember appointments

## For the care provider:

- Repeating information to the person
- Slowing down when talking; giving them more time to respond
- Giving the person a list of house rules, written directions, or pictures to help them understand and remember
- Coaching the person with the injury to "Stop, think and plan" then act
- Coaching the person to take deep breaths when feeling angry or anxious



Take Note

## Tools for Best Practice

### Brain Injury Screening Resources:

- OSU TBI Identification Method: <https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/neurological-institute/neuroscience-research-institute/research-centers/ohio-valley-center-for-brain-injury-prevention-and-rehabilitation/osu-tbi-id>
- NASHIA's OBISST: <https://www.nashia.org/obisssprogram>

**Brain Links' Strategies & Accommodations Tool:** <https://www.tndisability.org/rehabilitation>

**Symptom Questionnaire:** <https://mindsourcolorado.org/adult-symptom-questionnaire/>

**Cognitive Strategies Guidebook:** [https://mindsourcolorado.org/wp-](https://mindsourcolorado.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Strategies-and-Accommodations-Guidebook-CJ-Professionals-5.6.19.pdf)

[content/uploads/2019/05/Strategies-and-Accommodations-Guidebook-CJ-Professionals-5.6.19.pdf](https://mindsourcolorado.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Strategies-and-Accommodations-Guidebook-CJ-Professionals-5.6.19.pdf)



## Tennessee Resources

**Brain Links' Website** with many resources:  
[tndisability.org/brain](https://tndisability.org/brain)

**Brain Links' Toolkits** (for Service Professionals and Survivors): <https://www.tndisability.org/brain-toolkits>

**TN Department of Health TBI Program:**  
<https://tinyurl.com/3v5jrdt3>



**Tennessee Brighter Futures' Resource Pages & Training for Brain Injury:**

<https://www.tndisability.org/tbf-brain-injury>



**Resource Pages & Training on Aging and BI**

<https://www.tndisability.org/tbf-social-determinants-health>

**TN Brighter Futures is organized and facilitated by Brain Links through a contract from the TN Department of Health TBI Program.**



Aging and Brain Injury Resources

### References:

- Gardner, RC; Dams-O'Connor, K; et al. (2018). Geriatric TBI: Epidemiology, Outcomes, Knowledge Gaps and Future Directions. *J of Neurotrauma*, Vol 35, No.7. <https://doi.org/10.1089/neu.2017.5371>
- Peterson, AB; Thomas, KE. (2021). Incidence of Nonfatal Traumatic Brain Injury-Related Hospitalizations - United States, 2018. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*. Dec 3, 2021. 70(48);1664-1668.
- Traumatic Brain Injury and Concussion, [cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/](https://www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/)



<https://www.tndisability.org/brain>  
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