

Understanding TBIs in Athletes: What Everyone Should Know

What is a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)?

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) happens when a bump, blow, or jolt to the head — or a hit to the body that makes the head move rapidly — disrupts normal brain function. Concussions are the most common type of TBI in athletes, and even 'mild' TBIs can temporarily change how the brain works.

Why are TBIs Important in Athletes?

Athletes are at higher risk due to collisions, falls, or contact. Even mild TBIs can affect memory, focus, mood, and balance. Returning to play too soon can cause Second Impact Syndrome, which is life-threatening. Repeated TBIs may also increase the risk of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), depression, and early memory loss.

Signs & Symptoms

- **Physical:** headache, dizziness, nausea, blurry vision
- **Cognitive:** confusion, trouble concentrating, slow reaction time
- **Emotional:** irritability, sadness, mood swings
- **Sleep-related:** insomnia or oversleeping

Sources

- CDC — Traumatic Brain Injury & Concussion: <https://www.cdc.gov/traumatic-brain-injury/about/index.html>
- CDC HEADS UP — Concussion in Sports: https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/basics/concussion_whatIs.html
- Mayo Clinic — Traumatic brain injury overview: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/traumatic-brain-injury/symptoms-causes/syc-20378557>
- CDC HEADS UP — Signs & Symptoms: https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/basics/concussion_symptoms.html