



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Understand Danger of Brain Injury to Prevent Long-Term Damage

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **In today's BOOST we reflect on the causes of and treatments for brain injury.***

The recent death of beloved actor and comedian Bob Saget has brought the danger of traumatic brain injury (TBI) to the forefront of national consciousness. According to the autopsy report, Saget suffered fractures to the back of his head and around his eyes from a significant blow to the head and experienced bleeding across both sides of his brain. Saget's family said he went to sleep after his injury and never awoke.

Media reports are urging the public to be aware of what causes TBI and what to do if you suspect you may have suffered such an injury.

While Saget's death is an extreme example, TBIs are more common than you might think. In 2018, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recorded 220,000 TBIs in the U.S. In 2019, the CDC registered 60,000 TBI-related deaths, about 165 per day, in the U.S.

Even seemingly mild concussions can have serious effects on the brain. A concussion is a mild TBI that usually happens after a blow to the head or extreme movement of the neck and head. Identifying a concussion is important. According to a [Harvard Health](#) report, here are some signs of a concussion:

- Losing consciousness or feeling very sleepy
- Serious head pain
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Nausea
- Seizures

It is important to prevent additional concussions, especially in the weeks and months after the original concussion, while the brain is healing. Additional concussions can lead to brain damage, much like that suffered by professional football players. A recent study conducted on 3,500 former NFL players by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Harvard Medical School “showed that players who experienced concussions had elevated risk for serious cognitive problems, depression and anxiety, which persisted over time, as long as 20 years following injury.”

Said lead investigator Andrea Roberts, a research scientist at the T.H. Chan School of Public Health, “Our results underscore the importance of preventing concussions, vigilant monitoring of those who suffer them and finding new ways to mitigate the damage from head injury.”

Most minor concussions improve with rest and observation. People who have suffered a concussion are often asked to refrain from physically or mentally taxing activities for one or two days following the injury. If symptoms remain or return, it’s a good idea to notify your doctor. There is no medication known to speed recovery from a concussion.

It is rare, but some people who suffer minor concussions may develop persistent post-concussive syndrome, which may include headaches, dizziness and difficulty concentrating. Consult a doctor if you experience symptoms three months after a head injury.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Many causes of traumatic brain injuries, including concussions, are difficult to prevent. But the BHI offers a few suggestions for simple things you can do to reduce your risk of brain injury:

- **ALWAYS WEAR SEATBELTS.** Buckle up when riding or driving. Make sure children are secured in safety seats.
- **PROTECT YOUR HEAD.** When riding a motorcycle, biking, skating, skiing, horseback riding or playing a contact sport, wear a helmet that fits and does not move when you shake your head.
- **SECURE THE STAIRS.** Install handrails and safety gates, when needed, near staircases to prevent falls.
- **NO SLIP-UPS.** Add grab bars in the bathroom and non-slip mats in the tub and on the floor.
- **TRIP THE LIGHTS.** Improve lighting and eliminate trip hazards.
- **WINDOW DRESSING.** Install safety guards near windows to prevent children from falling.
- **MIND THE BASE.** Strengthen the muscles in your neck to absorb impact of blows to the head.
- **MAINTAIN YOUR VISION.** Have your eyesight checked regularly. Poor vision contributes to risk of falls and other accidents.

BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:

- Stress resilience
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Social connection
- Emotional wellbeing
- Meaning and Purpose
- Cognitive stimulation and creativity
- Engaging with nature
- General health
- Positive impacts

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, uses a cutting-edge approach to protecting brain health, promoting brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is building brain healthy communities, cultures that foster brain health protective factors and address risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the ***Be Brain Healthy*** movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference.*** To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).