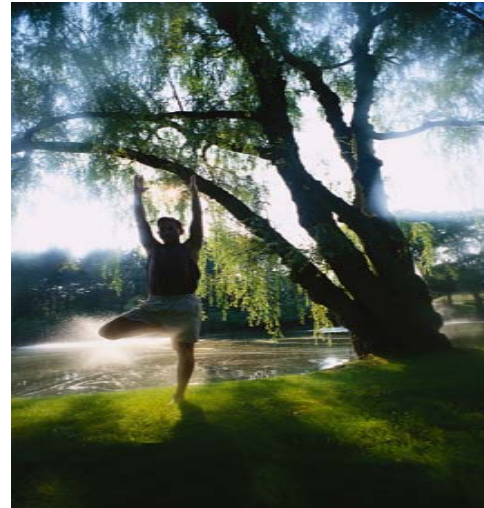


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Life Expectancy after Traumatic Brain Injury in Colorado



A Study by Craig Hospital and the Colorado Department of Health and Environment

Funded by a grant from the Colorado Traumatic Brain Injury Trust Fund



Caring exclusively for patients with spinal cord and brain injuries.

What is the Average Life Expectancy for Colorado Residents?

The average life expectancy for Colorado residents in 2005 (most recent available) was 78.9 years. African-American males have the shortest life expectancy at 73.8 years, while White non-Hispanic females have the longest life expectancy at 81.5 years.¹

Is Life Expectancy Different After Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)?

A recent study, funded by the Colorado Traumatic Brain Injury Trust Fund, looked at whether individuals with TBI have a different life expectancy than those without TBI.² Craig Hospital and the Colorado Department of Health and Environment worked together to look at information about the effects of TBI on life expectancy and what some of the risks for untimely death might be. They found that, in Colorado, individuals with TBI die of some causes at a greater rate than individuals without TBI and that some of these causes of death may be preventable. They also found that on average, TBI appears to reduce life expectancy by about 8 years.

What Are the Most Common Causes of Death in Colorado?

Individuals with TBI in Colorado share the same most common causes of death as all of the other residents in Colorado. Just like everyone else, a person with TBI needs to be aware of these common causes of death and the

healthy life choices that may allow us to live longer and healthier lives.

Below is a chart that shows the four most common causes of death in Colorado and compares the percentage of deaths for all Colorado residents with the percentage of deaths for people with TBI in Colorado.^{1,2}

Common Causes of Death	All Colorado Deaths	Deaths for those with TBI in CO
Circulatory*	29%	35%
Cancer	22%	10%
Respiratory	9%	10%
Injuries	6%	5%

*heart disease and stroke

Are Individuals With TBI in Colorado at Greater Risk of Some Causes of Death?

Yes. Individuals with TBI in Colorado are at a higher risk of dying from several causes, when compared to Coloradoans of similar age, gender and race without TBI. On the following page, you will find a list of causes of death and the increased risk of these causes of death for people with TBI in Colorado:

For further information on the Life Expectancy study contact:

Cindy Harrison-Felix, Ph.D.

charrison-felix@craighospital.org

Cause of Death	Increased Risk for Coloradoans w/TBI
Seizures	15 times*
Mental Conditions (includes unspecified dementia)	5 times
Pneumonias	3 times
Nervous System Conditions (includes Alzheimer's)	3 times
Infections	3 times
Digestive Conditions	3 times
Assaults	3 times
Suicide	2 times
Cardiovascular	2 times
Injuries	2 times

*For example, individuals with TBI in Colorado are 15 times more likely to die from seizures than Colorado residents without TBI who are of similar age, gender and race.

What Can People With TBI Do To Live Longer, Healthier Lives?

Everyone can benefit from making healthy choices and establishing healthy life style habits. For example, physical inactivity has been found to produce a higher risk of death in adults.³ One way to start making healthy lifestyle changes is to set realistic goals and develop a plan to meet those goals. Remember to consider all areas of your life when setting health and wellness

goals, including physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual health.⁴

Here are some suggestions that everyone can follow in order to live a healthier life. These suggestions can be beneficial for people with or without TBI:

1. Choose a healthy diet, rich in whole grains, vegetables, and fruits.
2. Maintain a healthy weight (see weight recommendations in the resources below).
3. Remember to stay hydrated, drinking plenty of water each day.
4. Be active: engage in some type of physical activity each day.
5. Learn to manage the stress in your life.
6. Do not smoke or use tobacco products.
7. Limit alcohol consumption and do not abuse drugs. (See below for specific recommendations after TBI).
8. Set up a schedule with your doctor for regular exams or check-ups.

Individuals with TBI may also benefit from some of the following suggestions to live a healthier life:

1. If you have seizures, follow all recommendations from your doctor such as taking your medications, following driving restrictions, avoiding alcohol, etc. Learn the warning signs of seizures, as well as how to respond. Be sure that family, friends and co-workers are also aware of this information.
2. Follow all medication schedules and talk to your doctor before making **any** changes.

3. If you are on a special diet (such as a pureed diet) consult your doctor before making any changes.

4. Follow your doctor and therapist's recommendations for use of equipment, such as grab bars, a cane, a walker, or braces.

5. Individuals with TBI are at a greater risk of dying from a fall. Pay attention to your environment and your balance. If you have difficulty walking or are using an assistive device, have someone remove throw rugs from your environment, keep furniture in the same position if possible, and be sure to report any changes in your balance, etc, to your doctor.

6. Individuals with TBI are at a greater risk of dying from an assault. Make good choices about the people you are with and the places you go.

7. Individuals with TBI are at a greater risk for sustaining additional brain injuries. Always wear a helmet when biking, skate boarding, skiing, and when involved in other sports where a helmet is recommended. Always wear your seatbelt while riding in a car. Do not drive if your doctor has not cleared you to do so.

8. For someone with TBI, there is no safe amount of alcohol to drink.⁵ Using alcohol/other drugs after TBI may interfere with the healing process and lead to serious problems.

9. Join a support group to develop a social network and to get emotional support.

10. Learn as much as you can about your injury and the resources available to you, advocate for yourself.

11. If you (or your family member) have problems with thinking and memory,

remember, "use it or lose it". Engage in stimulating cognitive activities every day. Converse with friends, read the newspaper, play Sudoku, or do a puzzle. Be aware of signs of increased cognitive decline.

12. If you are under treatment for an infection, be sure to take all of your medication and go to all of your follow-up appointments. Infection can lead to more serious illness.

13. Be familiar with the signs and symptoms of clinical depression, listed in the box below:

- Feeling sad or down in the dumps for more than 2 weeks
 - Feeling sluggish, restless, and unable to sit still
 - Having changes in appetite: gaining or losing weight for no apparent reason
 - Losing interest in things you used to enjoy
 - Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
 - Thinking of death or suicide
- If you begin thinking about suicide, get help right away!*
- National suicide prevention lifeline:
1-800-273-talk*

Remember, even though individuals with TBI may have greater risks regarding life expectancy, everyone can influence their health and wellness by making healthy lifestyle choices.

Health and Wellness Resources:

Nutrition: cnpp.usda.gov
 Weight: idealbodyweight.com
 Fitness: cdc.gov
 Support: biacolorado.org