

Brain Swelling and Traumatic Brain Injuries

by [John Demas](#) on 10/12/10

Many traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) develop as the result of [car accidents](#), sporting mishaps and major falls. Chances for full recovery often depend on whether the person develops further complications such as swelling (edema) of the brain. Doctors will first pursue orthodox practices to relieve the sudden, added pressure within the brain. One approach involves placing a shunt in the brain to try and remove some of the excess fluid that may be causing the swelling. If all else fails, some physicians will even perform a rather risky medical procedure known as a [decompressive craniectomy](#) (removing part of the cranium or skull) to relieve the elevated intracranial pressure. If correct measures aren't pursued, patients can suffer permanent brain damage or even death since swelling can prevent the entire brain from receiving adequate blood flow.

The Three Stages of TBI Treatment

Basic care for all traumatic brain injuries falls into three main treatment stages. The first stage is called the *acute* phase. The second is known as the *subacute* stage and the third phase is known as the *chronic* one.

Stage one involves stabilizing the patient's overall condition as quickly and efficiently as possible. If there appears to be major brain swelling, doctors may choose to insert an ICP monitor into the skull to keep them aware of the patient's constant brain pressure reading. While this is taking place, general hospital personnel will be trying to stabilize the patient's fluid levels, treat any present infections and manage any other developing problems.

Maintaining blood levels of sodium, sugar and calcium are critical to minimizing the chances

of seizures (many TBI patients are placed on anti-seizure medications for several weeks after suffering their injuries to minimize the chances of developing ongoing seizure conditions).

Once all major crises in the **acute stage** have been adequately handled and the patient has been stabilized, care moves into the **subacute** phase. This stage involves watching out for any new medical complications and obtaining the proper treatments or surgeries to correct them. The entire staff works during this stage to help the patient recover as much prior neurological and functional capacity as possible. This rehabilitative team includes physical and occupational therapists, nurses, neurologists and speech therapists.

Finally, once the patient makes it to the **acute** phase of TBI-related care, they may continue therapies from earlier phases of care or begin new ones that may help simplify their lives. Some of these patients may need help obtaining various medications, improving their muscle tone (while decreasing their limb spasticity) and locating appropriate psychological services. Doctors are still needed to supervise patients' pain, anti-seizure or psychiatric drugs during this chronic phase of treatment.

Hopefully, this general information about a TBI patient's brain swelling issues and the three main TBI treatment phases will help you better understand your own personal needs in this area – or those of an ailing friend or loved one.

Demas & Rosenthal remains one of Sacramento's most highly respected and accomplished personal injury law firms. We've been successfully representing clients since our firm first opened its doors back in 1993. Every Demas & Rosenthal attorney takes great pride in obtaining the full compensation and complete justice owed to every client.