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## The TBI checklist

A skier falls down a hill. Traumatic Brain Injuries can often be prevented by wearing a helmet, understanding conditions and dangers, and knowing your own limits.

*Drewbie talks helmets, chairlift beers, injury recovery and every other aspect of traumatic brain injuries in the High Country*

I'm back to talk TBI. OK, so you are probably thinking, Holy cow, Drewbie's brain injury must be really bad. Is he recycling his work now? Didn't he already write an article on this subject? Yes, that happened, but this is part two about traumatic brain injuries.

The first article identified who is at risk (basically all of active Summit County), causes (skiing and riding, biking or even walking on ice), symptoms (headaches, sleep problems, mental health issues) and more.

For the second article, I dig into prevention and recovery.



**Drew Mikita**  
Dear Drewbie

### PREVENTION TIPS

#### Wear your damn helmet:

Doesn't matter what you are doing — rock the melon-protection. It is alarming how many people don't use their helmets. When you're skiing, you're subject to fatigue, trees, equipment failure, human error, avalanche/trail slide, other people and God knows what else. I pretty much need a life-helmet!

**Find the right helmet:** Think a helmet isn't cool? A TBI isn't cool. Craniologie on Main Street in Breckenridge specializes in helmets. If you took a major hit last year now is time for a new one, especially if it's dented.

"Everybody has a different head shape and size," Joe Buth of Craniologie said. "It is important to come get your head measured to get the best helmet for you."

**Know conditions and dangers:** We do some crazy stuff up here. Do your research on the risks associated with any activity.

**Know your limits:** When I first moved here in 2007, I thought I was a good skier because I was back in Ohio. Then I skied with locals and got shown up. Be safe and push your limits, but respect your boundaries slowly. Don't pressure others into making bad decisions.

**Respect the terrain. This terrain out here is legit. Respect her.**

**Wear your seat belt:** Auto injuries are one of the biggest causes of TBI, and even minor car accidents can result in major TBI. Do it for Lauren Hoover!

Responsible alcohol and substance use: Many TBIs occur because people are under the influence. This can be as simple as slipping on ice after a few brews, or it can be caused by impaired decision making. Be responsible and safe with your use.

### IMMEDIATE RECOVERY TIPS

You haven't had a brain injury? Lucky! But brain health should be a priority for everyone, so if you're currently recovering or just know someone who is, here are tips for the days, months and years after.

**Seek medical attention:** Your instinct might be to avoid the doctor and tough it out. This is not advised. All head injuries should be treated as serious — better to overreact and be safe than underreact and have serious consequences, including death, stroke and memory issues.

**All head injuries are different:** The recovery process is unique for everyone. Having input about your

head injury from an expert gets you the best, most specialized care.

**Rest is key:** Like any injury, your brain needs to rest. The thought was once to not let people sleep immediately after a concussion; however, that is changing. After my TBI, I essentially took six months off from exerting myself significantly. It sucked, big time. I got fat and angry. Then, 10 months later, I ran the Mount Everest Marathon with no issues because I rested. It helps.

### LONG-TERM RECOVERY TIPS

**Get exercise:** Ease back into athletic activity. Take your time, and adapt activity if necessary. Yoga is great because it can adapt to your specific needs and limitations.

**Minimize substances:** Be responsible with your use, particularly in the immediate aftermath of a TBI. Say no to imbibing for a while.

**Plan your diet:** How you feed your brain is very important. Since experimenting with juicing, I see how important it is to feed it well. Avocados, nuts, blueberries, dark chocolate, broccoli and overall good dietary choices can help with TBI recovery and overall brain health.

**Avoid bright lights:** Sensitivity to light is a major complaint. Dim

light will help, as will minimizing screen time.

**Make lists and reminders:** Smartphones are great, but so are old-fashioned lists, like on paper with a pencil. This will help with memory and minimize frustration. Getting in routines is also very helpful.

**Stimulate the mind:** After an initial rest period, playing games, trivia and crosswords can stimulate the brain's recovery. Art, writing and hobbies can also engage the mind. Interact with old friends and stay in touch to practice your memory.

**Stay positive:** You will get frustrated, angry, confused and embarrassed. The people around you might also feel that way. Give yourself time to be upset, reset, relax and keep on keepin' on. Don't be scared to laugh at yourself.

Be grateful you are alive and reading this article: Simple as that.

Over a year after my injury I finally feel like myself again, and so can you. I still have some issues with confusion, memory, fatigue, mental health and light sensitivity. I am still on the mend, but the Drew that I was is still here, and future Drew is probably not terrible either. My TBI did not stop me from being me.