



An estimated 1.7 million people in the United States sustain a brain injury and 12,000 – 20,000 people sustain a spinal cord injury every year. That is one person every 21 seconds. This means that in the short time it will take you to read these facts, approximately 13 people will have suffered a traumatic brain injury!

ThinkFirst Northeast Rehab is a chapter of a national injury prevention foundation founded by U.S. Neurosurgeons to educate young people about the prevention of brain and spinal cord injuries. ThinkFirst Northeast Rehab is hosted by Northeast Rehabilitation Hospital in collaboration with the New Hampshire Brain Injury Association. The ThinkFirst Foundation has developed and implemented programs that educate students on the ramifications of the most serious injuries, those to the brain and spinal cord. Students learn that we are not merely talking about a scrape on the knee or a bump on the head. We are talking about injuries that cause permanent damage, brain disability or paralysis.

ThinkFirst is recognized by:

- The World Conference of Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion
- The Journal of Neurosurgery
- The Journal of Emergency Nursing
- Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation
- Paralyzed Veterans of America

ThinkFirst Northeast Rehab serves New Hampshire schools and communities by providing at no cost, injury prevention presentations by a health educator, accompanied by someone who has sustained a life altering injury.



Our youth and teen programs begins with a high-energy video in which several young people describe their experiences as trauma survivors. After the film, an Occupational or Physical Therapist gives a brief anatomy discussion showing what parts of the body can be affected by these injuries. The most powerful portion of the program is when a trauma survivor speaks to the students about his/her injury. The speaker describes how their injury occurred, their rehabilitation processes and the psychological and functional consequences of it. Most importantly, the guest describes how their injury has impacted their goals, hopes and dreams and how it could have been prevented. The program is designed to be interactive, allowing students to participate by asking questions. **ThinkFirst** stresses prevention by

“thinking first” in order to avoid permanent brain and spinal cord injuries. The main message of the **ThinkFirst** program is that young people can have a fun and exciting life while taking precautions to avoid injury.

Jim Scott and John Rackley are two of the VIP speakers in the **ThinkFirst** for Teens program. Jim suffered a traumatic brain injury as a result of a ‘drunk driving’ car accident, while John sustained a spinal cord injury from a trampoline accident. Jim, John and the other guest speakers bring a powerful message to the students regarding risk-taking behaviors and living with the long-term consequences of those behaviors.



The youth and teen programs provide a comprehensive brain and spinal cord injury presentation is additionally focusing on:

- Brain/spinal cord anatomy and function
- Water safety (diving, pool/lake play activities)
- Vehicle driving safety
- Bicycle safety
- Pedestrian safety
- Sport & Recreation safety
- Violence avoidance & prevention



ThinkFirst for Kids is designed to help young children develop lifelong safety habits to lessen their risk for traumatic injuries. Topics include

- Brain/spinal cord anatomy and function
- Water safety
- Vehicular safety
- Bicycle and Pedestrian safety
- Sport & Recreation safety
- Violence avoidance & prevention

ThinkFirst about Concussion is a presentation for teens. Students are taught that concussions are brain injuries that should be taken seriously. Information is presented on preventing concussions, recognition of signs and symptoms, following guidelines when a concussion is suspected and seeking medical attention. Interactive conversation and Questions & Answers sessions follow the presentations, so that the students understand the importance of following their physician's instructions for rest, activity and return to play.

ThinkFirst to Prevent Falls provides education on the basics of fall prevention for older adults complete with power point slides, handouts and an exercise program. Falls can cause brain injuries, hip fractures and other devastating consequences. Many falls could be avoided through simple preventative measures.

Topics covered include:

- Overview of the Brain
- Concussion Discussion
- Significance of Falls
- Fear of Falling
- Safety Inside the Home

- Community Safety
- Talking With Your Physician
- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Vision
- Medications
- Resources

For more information on the Northeast Rehab **ThinkFirst** chapter, or to schedule a presentation, please contact Zoe McLean at 603-501-5556 or you can email to zmclean@northeastrehab.com

For more information on injury prevention, visit the ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation at www.thinkfirst.org. The website offers resources to download for schools and communities.

