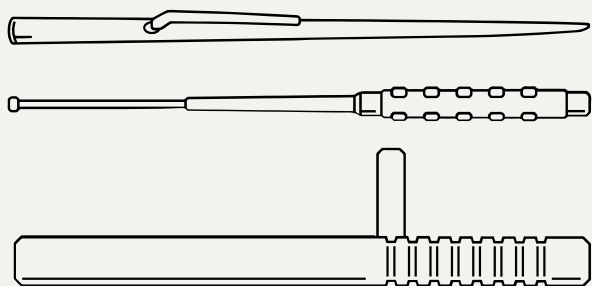


BLUNT FORCE WEAPONS

Blunt force weapons, such as the police baton, are ubiquitous tools of policing worldwide. Due to their commonality, they are often found in crowd control settings, wherein their misuse can lead to serious health consequences.

How they work

Blunt force weapons are striking devices that operate on the principle of pain compliance, by delivering focused impacts to an individual. Their length acts as a lever, enabling more forceful blows than through hands alone. They can also be swung to create distance, or they can be used as a leverage aid to push or hold.



Common types

STRAIGHT RUBBER AND PLASTIC BATONS

They are club-like blunt force weapons common in Western policing.

TONFA, OR T-HANDLE BATONS

These are similar to simple batons, but have a small handle projecting from the main body of the baton.

EXPANDABLE BATONS

These are metal batons of varying lengths are designed to collapse for storage when not in use.

WOODEN BATONS

These refer to wooden sticks or clubs used for policing. The *lathi* is a long cane frequently used for crowd control in South Asia.

WHIPS

Whips are infrequently used as police tools, outside of improvised use by mounted units. An exception is the *sjambok*, historically used in South Africa for crowd control.

Health Impacts

Batons and similar weapons can result in blunt force trauma: injury severity is dependent on the force of the blow, number of blows and the targeted body part. While blunt force weapons are meant to be used against the extremities, they often hit more sensitive body parts. When used against the head, neck, and torso, severe injury or death may occur. Blunt force trauma to the head can lead to traumatic brain injury, while strikes to the torso, face or genitalia can fracture bones, damage organs, and lead to internal hemorrhaging. Choke holds using the weapon as a lever pose the risk of asphyxiation.

Variables that can exacerbate injuries

Certain lengths, materials, and constructions of blunt force weapons can affect the risk associated with them. Longer, lighter batons can generate more energy at the tip when swung.

The tactic of the “baton charge” or “lathi charge”—wherein baton-armed police charge at a group of people to disperse them—can create crowd crush conditions, in which secondary injuries can occur from falls, trampling, or asphyxia.

Misuse or overuse of weapons against protocol or manufacturer instructions can lead to severe injuries.

Overhand strikes are more likely to impact the head or torso than horizontal strikes.

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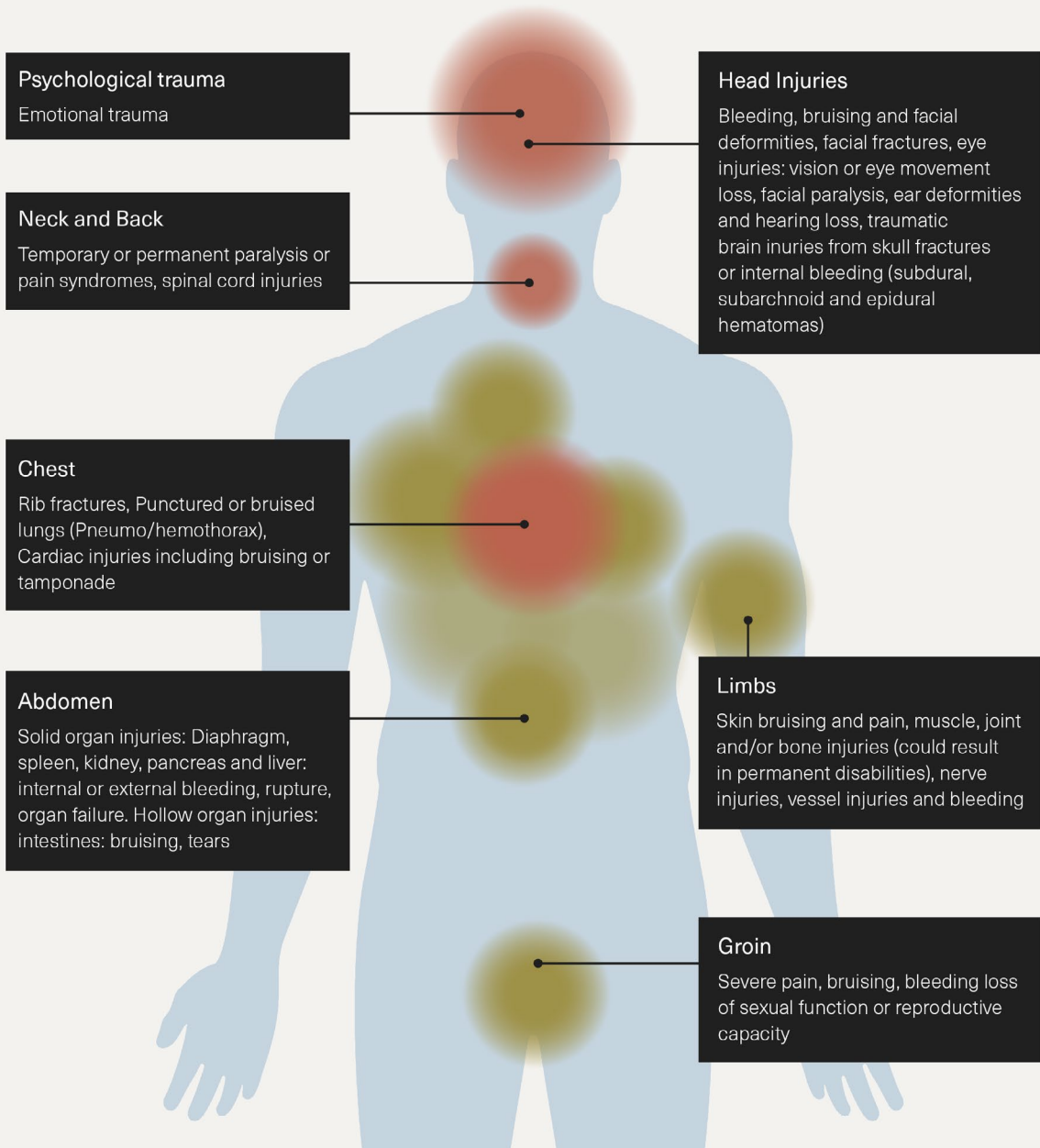
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Moderate to serious level of resultant trauma. Injury tends to be more long-lasting, but may also be temporary.



Highest level of resultant trauma. Injury tends to range from serious to long-lasting rather than temporary and may include unconsciousness, serious bodily injury, shock or death.



Policy recommendations

- » Batons should not be used for mere crowd dispersal, but rather in exceptional circumstances against violent individuals posing risks to themselves or others.
- » Baton use against persons neither engaged in nor threatening violent behaviour is likely to amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, or even torture, and should be avoided.
- » Batons should never be used against persons already restrained, or persons unable to remove themselves from the situation prompting baton use.
- » Driving jabs and hammer strikes to the torso, as well as any strike to the head, should be avoided due to the risk of internal injury.
- » Neck or choke holds should never be used.