

Traumatic Brain Injury Facts:

Emergency Medical Services

The signs of mild brain injury—concussion—can be subtle and may not occur for days or even weeks after the injury.

- ◆ ***Following a brain injury, you should be alert for symptoms that may not show up for days or even weeks after the injury.***

A child should return to the emergency department or see his/her physician immediately if:

- ☞ You cannot wake the child
- ☞ The child seems increasingly sleepy
- ☞ The child cannot stop vomiting (throwing up)
- ☞ The child has a seizure(s) or a sudden onset of daydreaming or a fixed stare
- ☞ The child has mood swings, very irritated, sad, or agitated
- ☞ The child says he/she cannot see clearly or has blurred or double vision
- ☞ The child is not speaking clearly, seems confused, or doesn't know who you are
- ☞ The child has blood or clear fluid from the nose or ears
- ☞ The child has increased headaches or neck stiffness
- ☞ The child's pupils (black center of the eye) are different sizes
- ☞ The child is stumbling or has other problems with walking

An adult should return to the emergency department or see his/her physician immediately if they experience any of the following:

- ☞ Trouble answering simple questions (What day is it? What happened to you?)
- ☞ Trouble waking up completely
- ☞ A headache that is getting worse even after medication
- ☞ Changes in behavior or personality and not knowing family and friends
- ☞ Still vomiting (throwing-up) 8 hours after the injury. Or vomiting that starts 1 to 2 hours after the injury
- ☞ Pupils (black center of the eye) that are different sizes
- ☞ Stumbling or other problems with walking
- ☞ Double vision (seeing two of everything), blurred vision, or field cuts
- ☞ Slurred speech, or repeating questions
- ☞ Seizures (convulsions), fixed stares, or "daydreaming"
- ☞ Blood or clear fluid from the nose or ears

If you notice that symptoms are getting worse since the injury, you may want to talk with the doctor about getting help. *Do this if you can answer **YES** to any of the following questions:*

- ✓ Has there been a personality change?
- ✓ Does the individual get angry for no reason?
- ✓ Does the individual get lost or are easily confused?
- ✓ Does the individual have more trouble than usual making decisions?

Remember . . .

The common signs of a mild traumatic brain injury are:

- ✓ Headaches
- ✓ Balance problems
- ✓ Sensory changes
- ✓ Sleep problems
- ✓ Pain problems
- ✓ Changes in personality, mood, or behavior
- ✓ Thinking problems
- ✓ Trouble communicating

When returning to work or school, individuals with brain injury may experience difficulties that they do not associate with the injury. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, a person with a disability does not need and may not want to disclose their disability to their employer. However, notifying an employer or school personnel regarding brain injury may avoid misinterpretations of behaviors.

◆ **State Services:**

For additional information, services, and support, you may want to contact your state health agency or vocational rehabilitation agency to see if your state provides specialized services such as rehabilitation, counseling, therapies, and information and referral. Some states have also developed specialized brain injury services through their developmental disabilities agencies. These state agencies may provide information regarding available community resources.

State vocational rehabilitation agencies provide employment training, education and job placement services while special education agencies can provide information regarding educational services. For further information about state services and family support contact the *Brain Injury Association* 703-236-6000 or the *National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA)* 573-882-3807.

Other important resources include:

- 📖 *When Your Child's Head Has Been Hurt* Arizona's Governor's Council on Spinal & Head Injuries, grant # MCJ-04TB20-01, MCHB
- 📖 *Understanding Brain Injury: A Guide for the Family and A Guide for Employers.* Both from Mayo Press, 100 First Street SW, Rochester, MN 55905
- 📖 *Facts about Concussion and Brain Injury: Where to get help.* From Brain Injury Association (www.biausa.org) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov.ncipc/tbi).

For more information on Traumatic Brain Injury and to see a link to other resource sheets, visit the web site of the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators at www.nashia.org or contact NASHIA at 98 Corporate Lake Drive, Columbia, MO 65203. This fact sheet was completed by NASHIA in cooperation with the National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Directors.