

Identifying Traumatic Brain Injuries

What is a concussion or traumatic brain injury?

- Any injury to brain tissue. The injury can have physical, emotional, or cognitive effects.
- Might be obvious if result of gunshot, stabbing, or other penetrating wound.
- Might not be obvious if injury is caused by banging one's head or other closed head injuries.

What are the symptoms?

- Headache
- Blurred vision
- Loss of balance/dizziness
- Sensitivity to noise or light
- Confusion
- Nausea/vomiting
- Loss of consciousness
- Memory problems
- Irritability
- Sleep disruption
- Ears ringing
- Feeling in a mental fog

How can you help someone with a possible brain injury?

- Get medical attention as soon as possible after a potential brain injury.
- Monitor the person's symptoms for 24 hours. Get medical attention if symptoms worsen.
- Get as much rest as possible in the days after the injury.
- Return to regular activities slowly.

Additional information about Traumatic Brain Injuries

- **What is a closed head injury?** This occurs when the soft brain tissue bounces against the bony skull during a fall, vehicle accident, explosion, or similar situation. Although the injury is not visible, bleeding and pressure in the brain can build up and cause the symptoms above or even death.
- **When do symptoms arise?** Every brain injury is different. Sometimes symptoms appear right away. Other times they take hours to develop. This is why any person who has suffered a head injury should be monitored closely for 24 hours after the injury.
- **How do I help someone right after an injury?** Get medical attention as soon as possible for anyone who has suffered a head injury. Get them emergency care if they have any of the following symptoms:
 - Unable to be woken up
 - Seizures
 - Dilated pupils
 - Repeated vomiting
 - Blood or other discharge from nose or ears
 - Symptoms that get worse over time
- **How do I help someone in the first 24 hours after a head injury?** Help them get rest while you continue to monitor their symptoms. Encourage them to sleep, limit physical activity beyond light walking, and limit exposure to bright lights, electronics, and loud noises. Get them medical attention if you notice any new or worsening symptoms.
- **How do I help someone in the first week after a head injury?** Encourage them to get as much sleep as they can, but also to slowly return to regular activities. Increase the intensity and duration of activity a little each day.
- **How long does recovery take?** Most symptoms improve within the first few days or weeks following a head injury. Other symptoms may take up to a year to resolve completely. It is important to be patient, get adequate rest, and prevent reinjury during this time.