

When Your Head Has Been Hurt



Many people who hurt their heads get well and have no long-term changes. Some individuals have changes that might not be noticed right away. You may see differences over the next several months that concern you. This card lists some common signs that you - or someone you know - may have a mild brain injury. If you notice any of the problems on the list - AND THEY DO NOT GO AWAY - see the "What to Do" box on the back of this sheet.

HEALTH CONCERNS



Headaches


Including:


- Headache that keeps coming back
- Pain in head muscle
- Pain in head bone (skull)
- Pain below the ear
- Pain in the jaw
- Pain in or around the eyes

Balance Difficulties

- Dizziness
- Trouble with balance

Sensory Changes

- Bothered by smells
 - Changes in taste or smell
 - Appetite changes
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- Ringing in the ears
 - Hearing loss
 - Bothered by noises
 - Can't handle normal background noise
- Feels too hot
 - Feels too cold
 - Doesn't feel temperature at all

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- Blurry vision
 - Seeing Double
 - Hard to see clearly "hard to focus"
 - Bothered by light

These changes don't happen often. If you or someone you know notice any of the difficulties on this list and they don't go away, contact your doctor as soon as possible.

- Severe headache that does not go away or get better
- Seizures: eyes fluttering, body going stiff, staring into space
- You seem to forget everything, amnesia
- Hands shake, tremors, muscles get weak, loss of muscle tone
- Nausea or vomiting that returns

Sleep Changes

- Can't sleep through the night
- Sleeps too much
- Days and nights get mixed up



Pain Concerns

- Frequent neck and shoulder pain
- Other unexplained body pain



Continued on Back

BEHAVIOR *and* FEELINGS

Changes in personality, mood or behavior

- Is irritable, anxious, restless
- Gets upset or frustrated easily
- Overreacts, cries or laughs too easily
- Has mood swings
- Wants to be alone or away from people
- Is afraid of others, blames others
- Wants to be taken care of
- Does not know how to interact with people
- Takes risks without thinking first
- Is sad, depressed
- Doesn't want to do anything, can't "get started"
- Is tired, drowsy
- Is slow to respond
- Trips, falls, drops things, is awkward
- Eats too little, eats all the time, or eats things that aren't food
- Has different sexual behavior
- Starts using or has a different reaction to alcohol or drugs
- Takes off clothes in public

THINKING DIFFICULTIES

- Has trouble remembering things
- Has trouble paying attention
- Reacts slowly
- Thinks slowly
- Takes things too literally, doesn't get jokes
- Understands words but not their meaning
- Thinks about the same thing over and over
- Has trouble learning new things
- Has trouble putting things in order "desk, room, papers"
- Has trouble making decisions
- Has trouble planning, starting, doing, and finishing a task
- Has trouble remembering to do things on time
- Makes poor choices "loss of common sense"

TROUBLE COMMUNICATING

- Changes the subject, has trouble staying on topic
- Has trouble thinking of the right word
- Has trouble listening
- Has trouble paying attention, can't have long conversations
- Does not say things clearly
- Has trouble reading
- Talks too much



www.tndisability.org/brain

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WHAT TO DO

If you or a loved one notice any of the difficulties on this list, and they don't go away:

Ask your doctor to refer you to a specialist in head injury who can help you learn skills (rehabilitation).

Ask your doctor to have you seen by a Board-certified Neuropsychologist. This specialist can help you understand and deal with changes in behaviors and feelings due to an injury.

Call the Tennessee Traumatic Brain Injury Program for more information:

1-800-882-0611

<http://health.state.tn.us/TBI/index.htm>

We have only listed the problems seen most often when someone's head has been hurt. Not every problem that could happen is on this list.

To obtain this information in an alternative format, contact the TBI Technical Assistance Center at: 202-882-0611