

MILD TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

AKA CONCUSSION

contents

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

CONCUSSION AND MILD BRAIN INJURY

WHAT IF THERE WAS NO LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS?

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS HOW LONG WILL THIS LAST?

POSSIBLE LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES

WAYS TO HELP

Is there a difference between concussion and mild brain injury?

- A concussion is a “mild traumatic brain injury” (MTBI). Other terms people use to describe mild brain injury are “knocked out”, “dinged”, and many other descriptions for the mild diffuse injury that can occur when the head is hit by an object or receives a blow.
- Common causes of mild brain injury are falls, motor vehicle accidents, sports related accidents, assaults and military incidents such as explosions (even people in the general vicinity of a blast can receive a MTBI from the indirect force).

Loss of Consciousness

- A person does not need to lose consciousness to sustain a concussion or MTBI. As a matter of fact, many people experience concussive symptoms without ever losing consciousness at all. A MTBI can involve any alteration of the

mental state at the time of the incident, including feelings of being dazed and confused.

What are the first signs of MTBI?

- No two brain injuries are alike. Experiences can vary greatly from person to person.
- Indicators that someone may have experienced a concussion or MTBI may include:
 - Headache
 - Dizziness
 - Nausea
 - Fatigue
 - Trouble staying awake or sleeping
 - Trouble remembering
 - Difficulty paying attention
 - Blurry vision
 - Balance or coordination difficulty

Screening for MTBI

“HELPS”

- Have you ever **Hit** your head or been **Hit** on the Head?
- Were you ever seen in the **E**mergency room, hospital or by a doctor because of an injury to your head?
- Did you ever **L**ose consciousness or experience a dazed or confused feeling because of an injury to your head?
- Have you experienced **P**roblems in daily life since you hit your head?
- Any significant **S**icknesses?

What are the long term implications?

- Most symptoms of MTBI are temporary and will resolve completely within a few weeks or months.
- HOWEVER, some people may experience long lasting complications from MTBI, also called *post-concussive syndrome*.
- Risk of repeat injury increases after the first concussion, and the effects can be cumulative.

Long term symptoms may include:

Headaches	Forgetfulness
Blurry or double vision	Difficulty making decision
Insomnia	Altered taste or smell
Easily irritated	Low frustration tolerance
Trouble understanding or following conversations	Sensitivity to light or noise
Anxious feelings	Fatigue

Ways to Help

- Encourage the person who is experiencing post-concussive type symptoms to seek help.
- Only a trained professional such as a medical doctor or psychologist can diagnose a MTBI.
- Referral to a physiatrist (aka: physical medicine and rehabilitation doctor) who also specializes in the treatment of brain injury can be the most valuable place to start for someone affected by MTBI.
- Identify helpful compensatory strategies and coping mechanisms and monitor use and consistency.
- Listen. Individuals living with MTBI are facing new challenges that interrupt the “normal” routine of daily life. Talking with someone who is respectful and understanding can be helpful and comforting.
- Understand that there is no “quick-fix” and remain patient.

Project STAR

For more information about traumatic brain injury, contact Project STAR at:

Carolinas Rehabilitation

1-800-634-2256 extension 51502 or

704-355-1502

www.carolinasrehabilitation.org

References and acknowledgements: Hammond, Flora MD, *Mild Brain Injury Postconcussive Syndrome & Sports*. Hammond & Guerrier, *Life is a Journey*. Taber & Hurley, *Identification and Treatment of Mild Traumatic Brain Injury in Veterans*.