



# Traumatic Brain Injury: Educational Materials



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## **IMPORTANT:**

**If you are experiencing a medical emergency, please call 911 or present to your nearest emergency room for evaluation and treatment.**



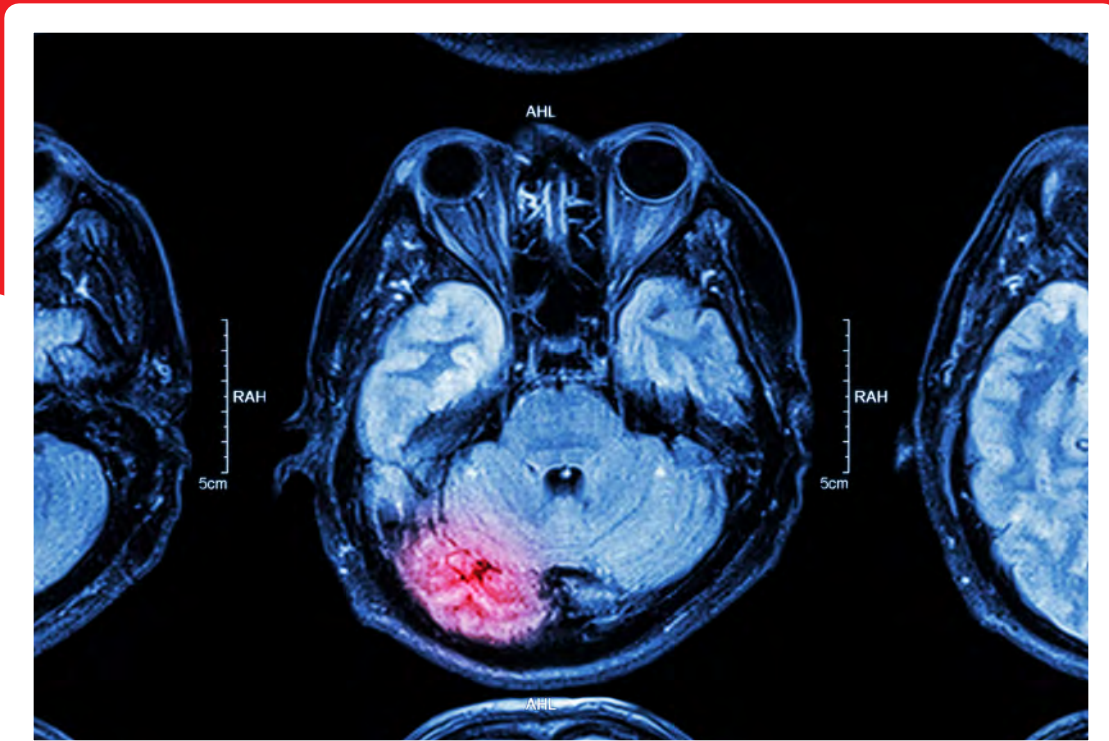
You should go to the nearest emergency room if the following conditions are present:

- ANY periods of loss of consciousness
- Unable to wake up
- Experiencing double vision or loss of sight
- A weakness or burning in your arms or legs
- A severe headache or one that progressively gets worse
- Any kind of seizure or convulsion
- Bad nausea or excessive vomiting
- Unsteadiness while walking or standing
- Any bruising around your eyes or ears
- Slurred speech
- If you become confused or exhibit odd behavior



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# What is a Concussion?



A **concussion** is a mild, traumatic brain injury (TBI). We know it is not “mild” when you are the person that sustained the injury. It is usually caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that disrupts the normal function of the brain. These TBI’s can range from “mild” (a brief change in mental status or consciousness) to “severe” (any period of unconsciousness or memory loss after the injury).

Any brain injury is scary, and this handout is to educate you, but you should always communicate with your healthcare provider. They are there to help and listen to you!



# What are the symptoms of a concussion?

- Loss of consciousness
- Headache
- Confusion
- Irritability
- Dizziness
- Blurred vision
- Ringing in the ears
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Slurred speech
- Fatigue
- Appearing dazed
- Fogginess



## Delayed symptoms could include:

- Memory problems
- Difficulty in concentration
- Sleep impairment
- Problem with the senses  
(such as difficulty tasting or smelling,  
or a sensitivity to light)
- Balance issues.
- Changes in moods
- Crying and emotional swings



# Why should you be concerned if you have a concussion?

**Traumatic brain injuries** can be serious - especially when they are undiagnosed and not treated in a timely fashion. In fact, evidence shows that a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) actually reduces life expectancy and results in an increase in long term mortality. Further, a study of over 350,000 veterans revealed that the risk of developing dementia after sustaining even a “mild” TBI without loss of consciousness, is more than double that of individuals who have never suffered a TBI.

**DEMENTIA RISK = 2x**



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# You have been diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury.



## What next?

### THINGS TO DO:

- **REST:** Get plenty of rest but don't lay in bed all day! You are to avoid any kind of over strenuous activity. Practice LOW ENERGY output.
- **SLEEP:** Get a good night's sleep. Take 1 or 2 short naps throughout the day, if necessary. Too many or too long of naps can reduce your ability to sleep at night. It is important to get at least 8 hours of sleep each night. The darker the room, the better sleep you will get.
- **DIET:** Proper diet and nutrition will play an important role in your recovery.
- **HYDRATE:** Drink lots of water! Did you know that approximately 60% of your body is made up of water? Your brain and heart are 73% water. If you are dehydrated, it can cause many problems including head aches, organ issues, joint problems, and much more. The better your hydration, the more your body can flush out the harmful toxins that have accumulated in your brain since your injury.
- **UNPLUG:** Fight the urge to go online and look at your smart phone, iPad, laptop, or computer screen. Also, put down the video games. Take a break from looking at a computer screen or monitor or television. Give your brain a break!
- **FOLLOW:** Please follow the condition specific directions that you are given and be a compliant patient.



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# Things to avoid if you have had a concussion:

- Avoid any kind of activity that might result in another traumatic brain injury!
- Avoid the use of alcohol. Alcohol will make your condition and symptoms worse.
- Avoid the use of caffeine. Sometimes patients will want to use caffeine to eliminate their cognitive fatigue or “brain fog” that often comes with a TBI. However, you should proceed with caution. Caffeine in small amounts may be safe after a TBI, but excessive caffeine consumption could slow down the recovery process. It is important to understand that caffeine is a vaso-constrictor, which means it constricts the blood vessels in the brain reducing blood flow. Without enough cerebral blood flow, the brain cannot get the vital nutrients it needs to repair itself.
- Avoid the use of stimulants or energy drinks.
- Avoid junk food. Instead, consume healthy, energy rich foods. These include blueberries, bananas, broccoli, fatty fish, and nuts.
- Avoid stressful circumstances and over-stimulation of the mind.
- Avoid being on the computer or smart phone.
- Avoid prolonged conversations on the phone.
- Avoid being on social media sites.
- Avoid the excessive intake of sugar, carbohydrates and dairy products.
- Avoid the use of Ibuprofen or Tylenol unless recommended by a doctor familiar with your condition.



# Final Notes:



- DO NOT play sports before full recovery. Further, do not exercise unless it has been approved by your treating physician.
- DO NOT drive unless it has been approved by your treating physician. This is especially important if you have been prescribed any medication.
- If possible, take some time off of work or study until you feel better.
- Some of your symptoms may come and go through out your recovery. Unless they are in the DANGER category, you can expect some good days and bad days. Most people will take several weeks before they feel back to “normal.” However, your return to “normal” activities may cause your symptoms to return. Please don’t overdo it and notify your treating physician regarding your condition with recurring symptoms.

