

What to Do If You Injure Your Brain

Did you know you don't have to hit your head to injure your brain?

Your brain is not a hard, fixed substance; it is soft and jello-like in consistency, composed of millions of fine nerve fibers, and "floats" in fluid within a hard, bony skull containing multiple sharp ridges, making it easily injured.

A brain injury can result from a car crash, a sports injury, from a seemingly innocuous fall, or even from a sudden, jarring movement of the head (like whiplash).

If a Brain Injury Occurs:

If you or someone you are with experiences an impact or violent shake to the head, seek medical advice.

Symptoms of a Brain Injury:

- Physical complaints - dizziness, fatigue, headaches, visual disturbances, trouble sleeping, nausea, sensitivity to light and sound, and poor balance
- Cognitive changes - poor concentration, memory problems, poor judgment, impulsivity, slowed performance, and difficulty putting thoughts into words
- Psychological concerns - depression, outbursts of anger, irritability, personality changes, and anxiety

Symptoms may develop immediately or after several days or weeks, and they can last for hours, days, weeks, months or longer. Ignoring your symptoms and trying to "tough it out" often makes symptoms worse.

Ways to Help Yourself Recover From a Brain Injury

There are a number of self-care steps you can take to help your brain heal.

First and foremost, you should protect yourself from injuring your brain again. People who have had repeated injuries to their brain may experience serious long-term problems and, in rare cases, it can cause brain swelling and even death.

Other things that you can do to take care of your brain after an injury include:

- Get plenty of sleep at night, and rest during the day
- Write down the things that may be harder than usual for you to remember
- Avoid alcohol, drugs, and caffeine
- Eat brain-healthy foods
- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water
- Ask your doctor when it's okay for you to drive a car, ride a bike, or operate machinery
- Avoid activities that are physically demanding (e.g., sports, housework, exercising)
- Avoid activities that require a lot of thinking or concentration (e.g., working on the computer, playing video games, balancing a checkbook)
- Increase your activity slowly
- Be patient because healing takes time

RESOURCES

To learn more about healing from brain injuries, you can visit:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - www.cdc.gov/TraumaticBrainInjury
- Brain Injury Association of America - www.biausa.org