



Patient information folder

Mild traumatic brain injury

The condition known as mild traumatic brain injury is more commonly referred to by the term *concussion*. Other common terminology includes minor head trauma, minor brain injury, or minor TBI. While a severe concussion will normally be referred to as a traumatic brain injury, normal concussions are referred to as being mild traumatic brain injuries due to the fact that a single injury of this type will not typically cause any serious long term health consequences. The loss of consciousness is typically short, lasting seconds to minutes (<15min), and there may be a limited period of (ongoing) amnesia.

Symptoms

Complaints after mild traumatic brain injury can manifest in different ways. Commonly seen symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Visual disturbances
- Memory loss
- Poor attention/concentration
- Sleep disturbances
- Dizziness/loss of balance
- Irritability-emotional disturbances
- Feelings of depression
- Nausea
- Loss of smell
- Sensitivity to light and sounds
- Mood changes
- Getting lost or confused
- Slowness in thinking
- Tinnitus/ear ringing

These symptoms may not be present or noticed at the time of injury. They may be delayed days or weeks before they appear. The symptoms are often subtle and are often missed by the injured person, family and doctors. The person looks normal and often moves normal in spite of not feeling or thinking normal. This makes the diagnosis easy to miss. Family and friends often notice changes in behavior before the injured person realizes there is a problem. Frustration at work or when performing household tasks may bring the person to seek medical care.

Guidelines

Mild traumatic brain injury is caused by physical trauma to the head. It is unknown why certain people have more symptoms than others. The first days or weeks, a lot of persons experience a variety of the symptoms mentioned above. These symptoms tend to subside soon without additional treatment. To improve your recovery it is wise to follow these guidelines:

- strict bed rest is **not** recommended. It is best to slowly mobilize until after a few days you can carry out your routine tasks
- Limit the amount of screen time (television, iPad, phone, computer, video games)
- Do not drink alcoholic beverages
- Do not take **aspirin**. Instead use paracetamol (acetaminophen) up to 1000mg, four times a day. By treating headaches it becomes easier to function as normal as possible and sleep well at night.
- It is important to avoid repeated physical trauma to the head

When to contact your doctor:

- Rapid worsening of your condition in the first days or weeks
- Significant increase of headaches
- Repeated vomiting
- Confusional state
- Somnolence (you're hard to wake up)

If symptoms persist for more than 6 months, see your general practitioner or neurologist for a consult to determine if a neuropsychological exam to find the nature of your symptoms is useful.