



Brain Injuries and Mass Casualty Events: Information for the Public

Traumatic brain injuries can occur during mass casualty events. If you think you or someone you know has a brain injury, contact your health care provider.

What is a Traumatic Brain Injury?

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is defined as a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the normal function of the brain. Not all blows or jolts to the head result in a TBI. The severity of such an injury may range from "mild," that is, a brief change in mental status or consciousness to "severe," that is, an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury. A TBI can result in short or long-term problems with an individual's ability to function independently, or changes that affect thinking, memory, sensation, language, and emotions.

Why Are TBIs a Problem in Mass Casualty Events?

In mass casualty events, such as the World Trade Center attack or the Oklahoma City bombing, TBIs were caused by flying debris or by a person falling and hitting their head. A blast from an explosion can also cause a TBI even when there is no direct contact with an object.

What Are Some Common Signs and Symptoms of a TBI?

The signs and symptoms of a TBI can be subtle. Symptoms of a TBI may not appear until days or weeks following the injury or may even be missed as people may look fine even though they may act or feel differently. The following are some common signs and symptoms of a TBI:

- Headaches or neck pain that do not go away;
- Difficulty remembering, concentrating, or making decisions;
- Slowness in thinking, speaking, acting, or reading;
- Getting lost or easily confused;
- Feeling tired all of the time, having no energy or motivation;
- Mood changes (feeling sad or angry for no reason);
- Changes in sleep patterns (sleeping a lot more or having a hard time sleeping);
- Light-headedness, dizziness, or loss of balance;
- Urge to vomit (nausea);
- Increased sensitivity to lights, sounds, or distractions;
- Blurred vision or eyes that tire easily;
- Loss of sense of smell or taste; and
- Ringing in the ears.

What Can You Do to Get Help?

If you think you or someone you know has a TBI, contact your health care provider. Your health care provider can refer you to a neurologist, neuropsychologist, neurosurgeon, or specialist in rehabilitation (such as a speech pathologist). Getting help soon after the injury by trained specialists may speed your recovery.

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For More Information, Contact:

The Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA)

- Call the toll-free help line at 1-800-444-6443 for help in English or Spanish
- Visit the website at www.biausa.org

The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC)

- Call Toll Free for information 1-800-870-9244
- Visit the website at www.dvbic.org

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- Learn about CDC's TBI-related activities and products online at: <http://www.cdc.gov/node.do?id=0900f3ec8000dbdc>.
- Download a free copy of CDC's " Facts about Traumatic Brain Injury" fact sheet.
- Download or order the free brochure, *Facts about Concussion and Brain Injury*, (in English and Spanish) online at: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/default.htm.

For more information, visit www.bt.cdc.gov/masscasualties,
or call CDC at 800-CDC-INFO (English and Spanish) or 888-232-6348 (TTY).

October 17, 2005

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