

Brain Injuries and Mass Trauma Events

Information for the Public

Brain injuries can occur during mass trauma events. If you think you or someone you know has a brain injury, seek medical attention.

What Is a Brain Injury?

Brain injuries are caused by a blow or jolt to the head that can disrupt the normal function of the brain. These injuries can range from mild to severe. Mild brain injuries are also known as “concussions” and are usually not life threatening. But sometimes, even mild brain injuries can cause serious, long-lasting problems.

Why Are Brain Injuries a Problem in Mass Trauma Events?

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

What Are Some Common Signs of a Brain Injury?

The signs of a brain injury may be slight and patients, family members and doctors may miss these problems. People with a brain injury may look fine even though they’re acting or feeling differently. The most common signs include:

- Problems with thinking or remembering, speaking, or reading;
- Difficulty paying attention or concentrating;
- Confusion, disorientation (getting lost);
- Mood changes (feeling sad or angry for no reason);
- Easily irritated
- Depression
- Changes in sleeping pattern;
- Headaches that won’t go away;
- Loss of energy and motivation (feeling tired);
- Neck pain;
- Blurred vision;
- Dizziness.

What Can You Do to Get Help?

If you or someone you know has been in a mass trauma event and you think you may have a brain injury, see your doctor or health care provider. Show them this fact sheet and tell them about the problems you are having. The doctor may be able to help you find a health care provider who has special training in the treatment of brain injury. Your doctor may 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!

For More Information

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 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- Visit the website at www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/tbi.htm
- **Order a free brochure, *Facts about Concussion and Brain Injury*** (in English and Spanish) on-line at www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/default.htm

