

## Communicating

- ◆ Ask others to speak slowly, repeat, or clarify when needed.
- ◆ Take time to think about what you want to say before saying it.
- ◆ Write down your ideas.

## Controlling Behaviour

- ◆ Remind yourself to stop and think before you speak or act.
- ◆ Take breaks. If you start to feel yourself losing control, leave the situation and take a few minutes to settle down.

## Managing Time

- ◆ Pace yourself. Do not overdo things.
- ◆ If you want to do a project, write down all the steps that you need to do to complete the project. Put a check mark beside each step that has been completed.

## Fatigue

- ◆ Do not fight fatigue – it is your signal that you need to take a break.
- ◆ To help sustain energy and focus, frequent short breaks are better than infrequent long breaks.
- ◆ Your brain needs rest to heal now. Give it time to do so.

## Alcohol and Drugs

- ◆ It is best to avoid alcohol and drugs while you recover. They may slow down the natural healing process of the brain and increase the risk of having other complications such as

seizures or another brain injury.

- ◆ You may be more sensitive to the effects of alcohol or other drugs (including caffeine) than before your injury.
- ◆ If you need help reducing or avoiding alcohol or drug use, talk to your doctor or look in the yellow pages under “Addiction.”

## Sleeping

- ◆ Caffeine sensitivity may increase after a brain injury. Limit coffee, tea or cola to the morning and early afternoon.
- ◆ To avoid difficulties sleeping at night, take a short nap or relaxation time in the afternoon rather than a long nap.
- ◆ Increase the likelihood that you will sleep better the following night. Always try to get up at the same time in the morning, even if you do not sleep well or have a schedule to adhere to.

## Are these symptoms temporary or permanent?

Recovery may differ depending on the individual and circumstances. The person should return slowly and gradually to his or her normal routine. **In the majority of people, most symptoms decrease over a period of about three months.** Recovery is

considered “complete” if the symptoms that remain do not interfere with your ability to complete everyday tasks. Symptoms that may remain over time include: minor problems with memory or problem solving, and difficulties coping under periods of high stress.

## What should I do if the symptoms do not go away?

If you are still noticing changes in your abilities and having problems months after your injury, talk to your family doctor. He or she can determine whether other conditions may be affecting your health, or provide you with a referral to a specialist. You may also want to consider contacting your local brain injury association for education and support groups, or look into individual counselling and/or mental health services.

## Contact

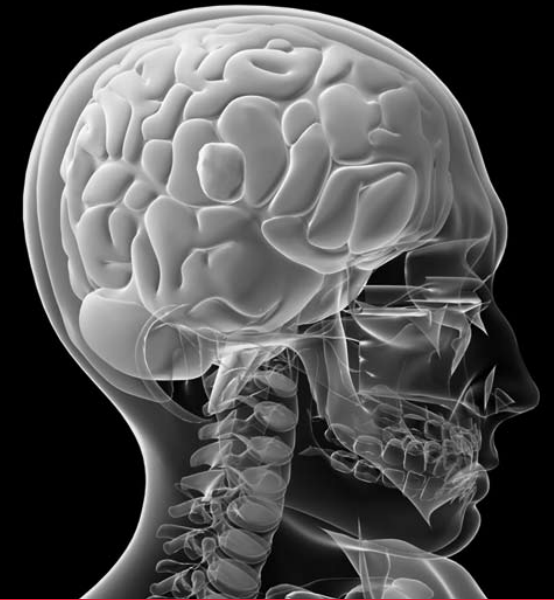
In the Southeastern Ontario region:  
Regional Community Brain Injury Services  
Tel: 613-547-6969  
Toll free: 1-800-871-8096

Providence  
Care

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[www.providencecare.ca](http://www.providencecare.ca)

# Mild Traumatic Brain Injury



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# Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

## What is it?

An injury to the brain, which results in a temporary disruption of the brain functioning. It may occur as a result of a fall, a blow to the head, or a sudden, violent motion, even when the head is not hit. It can occur without a loss of consciousness, although brief loss of consciousness – 30 minutes or less – is common.

## Common symptoms

- ♦ Headaches and dizziness
- ♦ Nausea and vomiting
- ♦ Blurred or double vision
- ♦ Confusion and disorientation
- ♦ Poor balance
- ♦ Speech and movements slower than normal
- ♦ Poor memory for the events immediately before the injury, and for some time afterwards - even though the person may have been conscious
- ♦ Problems with learning, memory, attention, and concentration
- ♦ Slower thinking
- ♦ Feeling physically and mentally tired
- ♦ Irritability, mood swings, and anxiety

## Does an injury to the head necessarily imply a mild traumatic brain injury?

A head injury may include injuries to the head, face, and neck area, as well as symptoms caused by damage to the skull, scalp, soft tissue, or nerves. An injury to the head may or may not result in a mild traumatic brain injury.

## “The Invisible Injury”

When an injury occurs, the soft, movable brain may shift and strike the rough inside of the skull. Brain cells may be bruised and their ability to communicate is disrupted. The occurrence of this injury may be widespread, and sometimes goes undiagnosed. Because it occurs at the brain cell level, it may not appear on x-rays, CT/MRI scans, or on neurological exams.

Physical recovery may be complete, and the person may look just fine however, problems in the areas of thinking, behaviour, and emotions may remain. Problems can include: forgetfulness, distractibility, emotional volatility, reduced coping, being disorganized, difficulty finding the right words, and changes in personality.

These difficulties are due to injuries to brain nerve cells and may be made worse by other challenges in our lives. *Usually these symptoms are temporary and resolve on their own.* Depending on how the injury occurred and what types of other difficulties a person is facing in their lives, symptoms can last longer and - in times of significant stress - worsen.

## What can be done to reduce these symptoms?

### See Your Doctor

- ♦ Follow all medical advice and do not assume you know the answers. Returning to regular activities too early can actually delay your recovery or lead to further damage.
- ♦ Your doctor can advise your workplace or school if you need to avoid certain activities as you recover.

### Avoid further injuries

- ♦ Physical exertion or a second head injury in a short time can delay healing or even cause further damage. Gradually work up to activities over a period of days, according to medical advice.

### Paying Attention

- ♦ Noise can be very bothersome. Work, read, study, or watch TV in a quiet area.
- ♦ Do not try to multitask. Finish one activity before starting another.

### Remembering

- ♦ Write down information.
- ♦ Use a check list or a day planner.
- ♦ Let people know you may need a reminder.
- ♦ Develop habitual safe places for keeping things (e.g., keys, glasses).