

Brain injuries: A guide for teachers

Most childhood head injuries are minor and hurt only the outside of the head. On rare occasions, a severe head injury can cause bruising or bleeding in the brain. This type of head injury requires immediate medical attention.

Head injuries fall into two categories:

- 1 External injuries, usually involving the scalp
- 2 Internal head injuries, which may involve the skull, the blood vessels within the skull, or the brain

Fortunately, most childhood falls or blows to the head cause injury to the scalp only. While these can be scary-looking, they usually aren't dangerous. An internal head injury caused from a blow or jolt to the head could be more serious because it may cause bleeding or bruising of the brain.

Recognizing a brain injury

Brain injuries are also described as traumatic brain injuries. Concussions are one of the most common brain injuries. Brain injury symptoms may be mild, but the injury could affect a child's long-term functioning. It is important to pay attention to the signs and symptoms of a head injury to treat them as soon as possible.

If your student has one or more of these symptoms after a head injury, report the accident to the school and call their parents immediately.

- Severe or worsening headache
- Noise or light sensitivity
- Concentration or attention problems
- Behavior changes
- Irritability
- Sleepiness
- Vision problems
- No memory of the impact or what happened immediately before
- Clumsiness or coordination problems
- Dizziness or confusion
- Vomiting
- Blood or clear fluid from nose or ears
- Seizures or convulsions



What to look for after a student has had a brain injury?

These changes can occur several weeks, or even months, after a bump to the head.

Physical changes

- Tired
- Tiring more quickly
- Continuing headaches
- Dizziness
- Sensitivity to light and noise
- Decreased endurance
- Sleep changes (insomnia or nightmares)

Behavior or personality changes

- Frustration
- More easily upset or angered
- Anxious or moody
- Withdrawn or isolated
- Impulsive
- Difficulty following the established routine
- Socially inappropriate (disruptive)

Cognitive changes

- Easily distractible
- Trouble paying attention and staying on task
- Memory difficulties
- Trouble learning new information
- Unable to organize information (may get lost, confused, or miss instructions)
- Problems with judgment, problem solving, or considering others' ideas
- Taking longer to understand information
- Processing less quickly
- Easily overwhelmed
- Trouble beginning or completing a task
- Trouble finding the right words

How does a student's behavior in the classroom change after a brain injury?

You may notice that your student:

- Cannot tolerate classroom noise
- Cannot concentrate
- Easily frustrated
- Trouble with school routines or transitions
- Easily tired
- Excessive tardies and absences
- Negative interpersonal interactions
- Failing grades

If it's necessary, see if your student is eligible for academic accommodations provided by Section 504. You may also refer the student for a special education evaluation.

Where can I find more information about brain injuries?

- **Brain Injury Association of Utah, Inc.**
801.716.4993 | biau.org
- **Brain Injury Association of America**
703.761.0750 or 1.800.444.6443 (family hotline) | biausa.org
- **Primary Children's Hospital**
801.662.4914 | intermountainhealthcare.org
- **Utah State Office of Education**
801.538.7500 | schools.utah.gov/

Notes