Traumatic Brain Injuries

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is sudden damage to the brain caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head. There are more than 200,000 cases per year and about 150 Americans die for TBI-related injuries each day. Common causes include car accidents, motorcycle crashes, falls, sports injuries and assaults. Injuries can range from mild concussions to severe permanent brain damage and may be immediate or delayed. Symptoms include confusion, blurry vision and concentration difficulty. Infants may cry persistently or be irritable. Treatment may involve rest, medication, and surgery.

In ED visits among children ages 0 to 17 years, 28% were caused by being struck by or against an object. Falls and motor vehicle crashes were first and second leading causes of all TBI-related hospitalizations (52% and 20%, respectively). The rates of TBI-related deaths were highest for person over age 75.

Seizures

A seizure is a sudden, uncontrolled electrical disturbance in the brain. It can cause changes in your behavior, movements or feelings, and in your levels of consciousness. The symptoms depend on the type of seizure. Generalized seizures affect both sides of the brain. There are two types: 1) Absence (petit mal) can cause rapid blinking or a few seconds of staring into space and 2) Tonic-clonic (grand mal) where the muscles become stiff (tonic) and clonic (periods of shaking or jerking parts of the body. The person may cry out, lose consciousness, fall to the ground and have muscle jerks or spasms.

The second type of seizure are called focal (partial) seizures which affect one area of the brain. There are three types. 1) Simple focal seizures cause twitching or a change in sensation such as a strange taste or smell. 2) Complex focal causing confusion where the person is unable to respond to questions for a few minutes. 3) Secondary generalized occurs when one side of the brain, then spreads to both sides. Seizures may last as long as a few minutes.

Not all seizures are emergencies. If a seizure lasts more than 5 minutes or is injured, call 911.
- Stay with the person. Comfort and speak calmly.
- Ease person to the floor & turn on one side to help them breathe.
- Clear the area around them of anything hard or sharp.
- Place something soft & flat under their head.
- Remove eyeglasses.
- Loosen ties or anything around the neck.
- Do NOT hold the person down.
- Do NOT put anything in their mouth.
- Do NOT attempt CPR during the seizure.
- Do NOT offer the person water or food until they are fully alert.
- They may lose bowel and/or bladder control.

Concussions

A Concussion is a brain injury that affects how the brain works and can happen even if you haven’t been knocked out. If you think you have a concussion, you should not return to play on the day of the injury and until a health care professional says you are OK to return to play or work. Concussion symptoms differ with each person and with each injury, and may not be noticeable for hours or days. Common symptoms include:

- Headache
- Difficulty remembering
- Confusion
- Balance problems
- Nausea/vomiting
- Slugish, hazy, groggy
- Irritable
- Light/noise bothers
- Double/blurry vision
- Slowed reaction time
- Sleep problems
- Loss of consciousness

Playing or practicing with concussion symptoms is dangerous and can lead to a longer recovery and a delay in return to play or work. During recovery, exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration such as studying, working on the computer, or play video games may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or worsen. While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. A repeat concussion can result in permanent damage to the brain. They can even be fatal.

What should you do if you thing you have a concussion?
- Don’t hide it. Report it.
- Get checked out.
- Take care of your brain. A repeat concussion that occurs while your brain is still healing can cause long-term problems that may change your life forever.

It’s Cold Out There!

Hypothermia is when the body uses up its stored energy and can no longer produce heat. Early symptoms include: shivering, fatigue, loss of coordination, confusion and disorientation. Late symptoms include: no shivering, blue skin, dilated pupils, slowed pulse and breathing, and loss of consciousness. Move the victim to a warm room. Warm the center of the body first: chest, neck, head, and groin using an electric blanket, or use skin-to-skin contact under loose, dry layers of blankets, clothing, or towels. Warm beverages may help, but do NOT give alcohol. If no pulse, begin CPR.

Frostbite occurs when an injury to the body caused by freezing mostly affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, and toes. Symptoms include: reduced blood flow to the hands and feet, numbness, aching, tingling or stinging, and bluish or pale, waxy skin. As the condition worsens, the area may turn black. Get them into a warm room ASAP. Do not walk on the frostbitten feet or toes. Immerse the affected are in warm water. Do NOT use a heating pad, fireplace, or radiator for warming. Do NOT rub the affected area. This can cause more damage. Call 911. www.cdc.gov