Brain Injury in Young Children

Prevention is the Only Cure

Falls are the leading cause of traumatic brain injury in children between 0 and 4 years.

Play safely: Make sure playground equipment is properly designed and maintained, and have a safe, soft landing surface in case a child falls.

Make home safety improvements: Install stair gates, guard rails, and guards on windows above ground level.

Keep sports safe: Make sure your child wears a helmet when bike riding, skating, or playing active sports.

Supervision is key: Always supervise a young child around stairs and playground equipment.

Signs and Symptoms

Brain injury looks different in every child. Have a doctor examine your child if any of the following changes persist after a blow to the head:

- decreased strength or coordination
- changes in sucking or swallowing
- decreased appetite
- decreased smiling, vocalizing or talking
- frequent rubbing of the eyes or head
- decreased ability to focus the eyes
- unequal pupil size
- increased sensitivity to light or sound
- extreme irritability

Multiple Injuries

Sustaining multiple concussions is particularly dangerous to young children. Even when a blow to the head seems minor, a second equally-minor injury can have devastating results.

Keep a record of any injuries to the head that your child sustains. Symptoms of an early brain injury may not appear until a child reaches late elementary or middle school years.

Knowing how to prevent brain injuries helps keep children safe. Brain injury lasts a lifetime.

For more information

Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania
http://www.biapa.org
Brain Injury Help Line (PA only)
1-866-412-4755
Brainline
http://brainline.org

Brain Injury Association of America
http://www.biausa.org
International Brain Injury Association
http://www.internationalbrain.org

Adapted with permission from The Nebraska Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Council’s Task Force on Children and Youth.

Funded in part by TBI Prevention Grant #16514MC-06758 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau. Contents are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of HRSA. Original version November, 2009.