



PREVENTION. CARE. RECOVERY.

Te Kaporeihana Āwhina Hunga Whara

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# Knowing about your Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Information presented in this publication is derived from:

Traumatic Brain Injury: Diagnosis, Acute Management and Rehabilitation (July 2006) New Zealand Guidelines Group

**For more information**

ACC information online

[www.acc.co.nz](http://www.acc.co.nz)

Claim information freephone

0800 101 996

We have interpreters who can help you talk to us.

## Knowing about mild TBI

There is a distinction between visible injuries to the scalp (“Head Injuries”) and internal injuries to the brain itself (“Traumatic Brain Injury” or TBI). Mild TBI is sometimes referred to as a “concussion”.

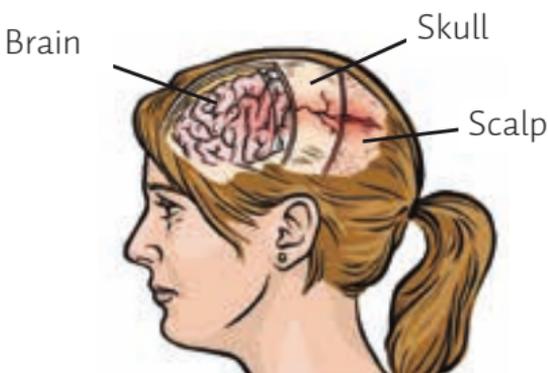
Head injuries are common but very few have associated brain injuries. A small group of people who have a head injury will develop ongoing symptoms, which suggest a mild level of TBI.

*This booklet provides information to assist people and their family/whanau understand the effects of mild Traumatic Brain Injury.*

The head consists of a bony box, the skull, which is covered by layers of muscle, fat and skin (scalp), which help provide external protection. Inside the box is the brain, which is made of soft but firm tissue. The brain is protected by layers of tough tissue and all these structures are bathed in a small amount of fluid (cerebrospinal fluid), which provides a degree of shock absorption to protect the brain as the head moves.

### The head

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## How do I know whether I have injured my brain?

Minor symptoms are very common in the first 24 hours after head injuries. These are usually resolved without treatment. If symptoms persist for longer than 24 hours, you may have suffered mild TBI.

Typical symptoms of mild TBI are:

- persistent headache
- feeling tired or dizzy
- blurred vision
- difficulty concentrating
- difficulty with memory
- moodiness, short temper or irritability
- intolerance of noise
- reduced interest in sexual activity.

Even if these symptoms persist beyond the first 24 to 48 hours, they usually settle without specific treatment. This often takes from seven to 10 days, but on rarer occasions can take six to eight weeks.

## Important facts

- Most patients with symptoms of mild TBI recover fully.
- Specific treatment is rarely needed.
- CT scans are often normal in mild TBI.
- Skull X-rays are rarely required.

## Questions to ask your health care professional

- How long will my symptoms last?
- Will I get back to normal?
- When can I return to work and sport?
- Can I drive a car?

## Tips to help your recovery

### Do

- Seek advice from your family doctor (GP)
- Admit to yourself when you are tired

- Rest when necessary but do not spend all day in bed
- Take paracetamol if necessary. If this does not control your headache you should see your doctor
- Continue taking your regular medications
- Discuss a “gradual return to work” (reduced work hours and lighter duties) with your doctor and employer, if necessary.

### **Do not**

- Return to work until you feel able to do so
- Undertake strenuous activities, especially contact sports. Many sporting bodies will not allow you to take part in sport until you have been free of symptoms for a specified length of time
- Take alcohol or illicit drugs
- Drive a car until your concentration is good enough for you to do so, and you have been cleared to drive by your doctor.

## Rehabilitation

Most people with symptoms following head injuries recover without specific treatment. Further assessment and treatment is not usually required unless symptoms last for more than four to six weeks. If your symptoms do persist longer you should see your family doctor.

Most people with mild TBI experience problems with mood and behaviour, rather than obvious physical disability. The most important factor in recovery involves support to help you understand your symptoms. You may need to adapt your life-style a little bit to allow you to recover fully. Your family/whanau should also get some support to understand and help you with your recovery.

# Everyone has a role to play in supporting your return to activity, including work (both paid and unpaid)

## Your workplace should

- Be safe
- Provide support, help with a rehabilitation plan and suitable duties – restricted hours or alternative or changed tasks – to keep you at work
- Be in contact with ACC

## Your health professional should give you

- Useful advice and treatment, or referral for treatment
- Support in developing a rehabilitation plan
- Appropriate follow-up

## You should

- Take control and stay positive
- Get in early and report your head injury to your employer
- Seek advice and treatment from a health professional
- Discuss a plan to stay at work with your employer, ACC and your health professional

## Your family can

- Give you support and encouragement to stay active and positive
- Be reassured that adequate support and treatment is being given

## ACC can

- Provide information, support and guidance
- Advise your workplace and health professional about ACC programmes that can help you in getting back to work early, such as the:
  - Stay at Work Programme
  - Work Ready Programme

# My important contacts

## **My health professional** (eg. doctor, physiotherapist)

Name

Phone number

## **My employment contact person** (eg. manager)

Name

Phone number

## **My ACC contact person** (eg. case manager)

Name

Phone number

ACC claim number

## **Other contacts**

Name

Phone number

Name

Phone number





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