

# Mild Traumatic Brain Injury: A Guide for Educators

## What is a mild brain injury?

- A blow or jolt to the head can result in a traumatic brain injury (TBI), which can disrupt the function of the brain. Concussions, also called “closed head injuries”, are types of TBI.
- The symptoms may be mild, but could affect the child’s long-term functioning.

## Where can injuries occur in schools?

- Classrooms and hallways
- Playgrounds
- Gym Class
- Sporting activities
- Almost anywhere!

## Immediately following the injury:

If your student has one or more of these problems after an injury to the head, follow your school’s accident reporting procedures and notify the child’s parents immediately.

### Symptoms may include:

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

Watch for longer-lasting effects of a brain injury that can occur several weeks, or even months, following a bump to the head.

*These effects can occur even if symptoms were not observed immediately after the injury:*

### Physical Changes:

- Fatigued
- Tires more quickly
- Continuing headache
- Dizziness
- Sensitivity to light and noise
- Decreased endurance
- Sleep changes (can’t sleep, nightmares, etc.)

### Behavior or Personality Changes:

- Frustrated
- More easily upset or angered
- Anxious or moody
- Withdrawn or isolated
- Impulsive
- Difficulty following the established routine
- Socially inappropriate (disruptive, doesn't inhibit comments)

### Cognitive (Thinking) 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, and/or considering others' ideas
- Takes longer to understand information
- Processes less quickly
- Easily overwhelmed
- Difficulty initiating and/or completing a task
- Difficulty with word retrieval

Has the student's behavior and/or performance changed since the brain injury?

### Classroom Observations:

- Cannot tolerate classroom noise
- Cannot concentrate
- Exhibits frustration
- Has difficulty with school routines and/or transitions
- Easily fatigued
- Excessive tardies and absences
- Negative interpersonal interactions
- Failing grades

## Accommodations

Possible accommodations might include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Structure and simplify the classroom environment as much as possible (same schedule each day, reduced clutter, consistent cues, and written classroom rules)
- Break tasks into component parts; present parts in gradually increasing levels of difficulty
- Allow frequent breaks to avoid cognitive fatigue and overload
- Provide a quiet area for rest breaks
- Tailor assignments and homework (three ten-minute assignments achieve more than one half-hour assignment)

- Utilize positive reinforcement (rewards)
- Provide concise verbal instructions
- Provide written, as well as verbal directions, for tasks
- Use visual prompts
- Adjust expectations to take into account the student's physical problems (headaches, fatigue, medication side effects)
- Prepare the student for and assist with transition activities
- Have the student use assistive technology (tape recorders, computers, alarm watches, organizational planners, and calculators)

If necessary, conduct an assessment to determine eligibility for academic accommodations provided by Section 504 or refer the student for an evaluation for Special Education.

## For More Information:

Brain Injury Association of Utah, Inc.  
 5280 South Commerce Drive, Suite E-190 Murray, Utah 84107  
 (800) 281-8442  
 (801) 716-4993  
[www.biau.org](http://www.biau.org)

Brain Injury Association of America  
 1608 Spring Hill Dr., Suite 110 Vienna, Virginia 22182  
 (703) 761-0750  
 Fax: (703) 761-0755  
 Family Helpline 1-800-444-6443  
[www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org)

Primary Children's Medical Center  
 100 North Medical Drive  
 Salt Lake City, Utah 84113  
 (801) 588-3069

Utah State Board of Education  
 250 E 500 S, P.O. Box 144200, Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200  
 (801) 538-7716  
 Fax: (801) 538-7991  
[www.schools.utah.gov/sars](http://www.schools.utah.gov/sars)

*This brochure is supported in part by the MCHB TBI Grant1 H21MC01691-01-00 from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Health Resources and Service Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau. The contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of DHHS. This is in the public domain. Please duplicate and distribute widely.*