

Warning Signs: Young Children's Traumatic Brain Injuries

by *Traumatic Brain Injury Attorneys* on 02/08/11

Approximately 1.7 million Americans suffer **traumatic brain injuries** (TBIs) each year. Children aged four and under, along with teens between 15 and 19 years of age, are the two groups most likely to incur such injuries. Young children frequently suffer their TBIs while exploring their immediate surroundings.

Since children's brains are still developing, their TBIs can be much more difficult to properly assess and they often suffer more serious injuries than adults.

Signs A Small Child May Have Suffered a TBI

Fortunately, most parents manage to keep their young children under close supervision. However, children at play frequently fall and it's up to their caregivers to determine if they just need to be comforted or require immediate visits to their pediatricians (or nearby emergency rooms) for possible diagnostic tests.

Once your child starts crying, particularly if she's lying on the ground or floor, immediately run to her and see if she can either describe what hurts or at least point to it. If there's not a noticeable bump or sign of broken skin on her head, observe her carefully. Be on the lookout for one or more of the following signs of a **TBI**:

- An increase in irritability;
- A loss of interest in toys that recently held her interest;
- A sudden loss of recently learned toilet training skills;

- A marked change in her eating habits or sleeping patterns;
- Changes in her school behavior or interactions with others;
- An unusual increase in fatigue or sleepiness;
- An increase in complaints about headaches;
- Unexplained vomiting unrelated to any illness; and
- An increase in balance issues causing additional falls

When deciding whether or not to take your child in for medical attention, keep in mind that most concussions do *not* involve a loss of consciousness. Should a doctor examine your child and not find any noticeable deficits, you'll probably be told to keep her at home under extra close supervision for a day or two to see if any of the symptoms listed above start to appear. If they do, you'll probably be sent to have one or more diagnostic tests run.

Hopefully, your children will never suffer a bad fall. To minimize that risk, you may want to review the following safety tips for preventing young children from suffering falls at home.

Simple Steps for Preventing Children from Falling at Home

- Once a child can walk and run, make it clear that you will not tolerate any running in the house;
- Never use any throw rugs on the floors;
- Avoid using extension cords or any long wires that might cross areas your children are likely to walk over while playing;
- If they're tall enough, show your children how to hold on to the side of the bathtub while you help dry them off;
- Have your children hold onto your shoulder as you dress them each day;
- Never allow your children to walk around with plates or glasses in their hands;
- After every play period, help your child put all toys back where they belong so no one can trip on them;
- Provide your child with appropriate slip-on shoes (or those with Velcro straps — if they're too young to keep shoelaces tied);
- Keep all floor areas clear so that no one will trip over books, newspapers or other items that should be put away.

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