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So, I want you to imagine that you are the mother or father of a child, or a husband/wife, there at the doctor with your loved one. There's been an accident, and the doctor needs to evaluate whether or not your child or your spouse has [suffered a brain injury](#). What are the [red flags](#) that should suggest that the injury sustained may not just be a minor injury, but it may be a brain injury?

First, what needs to be paid attention to is the incident history. What happened? Was there a fall? Was there a violent shaking or blow to the head? Was there a force causing a [concussion](#)? Was there loss of consciousness? Was there any alteration in the person's mental state at the time of the collision or accident? Has the person been exposed to something toxic, or an electric shock? Have they had a cardiac event? Was there an issue to the spine? Was there a near drowning? These are all parts of the patient's history that should be inquired about to determine whether or not there are any red flags for brain injury.

As far as physical symptoms go, does the person report a sensitivity to light? Are they squinting? Do loud noises or certain frequencies affect them? What about touch? Crowds? Busy environments? Are they confused when they are surrounded by a lot of people? Do they have difficulty understanding where their body is in space? Are they bumping into things or people? Is it a patient who previously didn't have a problem climbing up a ladder, but now has a problem going up and down stairs? [Health care providers](#) and family members need to pay attention whether or not the person who may have a brain injury has sensitivity to any of those things.

Other red flags that may indicate a brain injury include

- changes in vision, taste or smell
- muscle weakness
- inability to concentrate
- decreased reading comprehension
- diminished auditory comprehension
- irrational fears
- problems with judgment

Often you see with people who have traumatic brain injuries who go to work and one day they are doing just fine, performing tasks that they've performed for years, and then as the brain injury takes hold, it is clear that they are unable to do these basic things in the same way or they are unable to do them at all. Often in brain injured patients, especially where there's a diffuse brain injury or an injury to the [specific lobes of the brain](#), there may be an overactive sex drive. Others may isolate themselves or avoid social activities.

These are things that we as family members, friends, health care providers, and coworkers need to be paying attention to. The questions need to be asked, and the work needs to be done to try to understand what's going on. These are all red flags that suggest there might be a brain injury.