

## Traumatic Brain Injury Program (TBI)



## Tips to Promote Better Recovery From a MILD TBI

### WHAT IS TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY?

A Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is caused by any shock to the head with enough force to damage the brain or brain stem. Such a shock may destroy or weaken the functioning of brain cells (neurons).

In general, the more severe the shock to the head, the more severe and permanent the consequences will be.

### WHAT DIFFICULTIES IS ONE LIKELY TO HAVE FOLLOWING A MILD TBI?

A MILD TBI causes a temporary disruption of the functioning of the brain. The prognosis in the majority of cases is either excellent or very good.

Some people experience one or more difficulties following a MILD TBI; other people experience none. These are the most common symptoms of a MILD TBI:

- ▶ Headaches
- ▶ Dizziness or vertigo
- ▶ Nausea and vomiting - often in the first few days following the MILD TBI
- ▶ Blurred vision
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Sluggishness
- ▶ Trouble sleeping
- ▶ Increased sensitivity to light or noise
- ▶ Hearing difficulties (ex: ringing in the ears...)
- ▶ Difficulty finding the right words
- ▶ Difficulty in completing tasks
- ▶ Trouble with memory
- ▶ Decreased attention and concentration
- ▶ Irritability
- ▶ Impulsivity or aggressive behaviors
- ▶ Lack of initiative or motivation
- ▶ Feelings of depression or anxiety
- ▶ It is common for people to discover one or more of these difficulties when they try to return to their normal routines of living.

### WHAT TO DO? TIPS TO PROMOTE A BETTER RECOVERY

1. Return to your normal activities of life gradually. Rest whenever you feel tired. "Don't fight the fatigue".
2. Opt for places that are calm and peaceful
3. Adopt a comfortable routine
4. Choose to eat healthy foods
5. Avoid drinking alcohol or taking other drugs and decrease smoking cigarettes during the first three months after the TBI accident
6. Avoid overworking; avoid new situations that might increase stress or conflict
7. Take regular breaks after 30 minutes of strenuous work or intense activity. Be aware of any signs of fatigue and respect them
8. In the beginning, limit the number of activities you do in each day
9. Return to your daily activities by doing the tasks that are easy and simple to accomplish. Gradually take on the tasks that are longer and more complex to do
10. Temporarily avoid contact sports, physical activities that are too intense or activities that demand endurance
11. Avoid all activities that might put you at risk of having another TBI (ex: biking without a helmet, riding in car with seatbelt unattached...)
12. Do the activities you enjoy, but at a moderate pace
13. When studying, write summaries of your reading and highlight the principle ideas in the text
14. Use an agenda and take notes
15. Take the time to organize and express your thoughts. Don't jumble up your ideas; take one thing at a time
16. Accept your limitations; they are temporary
17. Don't dwell on your mistakes; let them go
18. Give yourself time to recover; don't push
19. Speak to people you trust - parents friends, health professionals - who can understand what you are going through and help you
20. Inform your employer or professor
21. Accept help from family and friends
22. Practice the techniques of relaxation
23. Take your anti-pain medications as prescribed; don't wait until the pain becomes unbearable. If pain persists, call or see your doctor
24. Avoid movements or situations that might put you at risk for falls
25. Take deep breaths if you feel like you are going to explode with anger. Try to control your emotions
26. If you have difficulty sleeping, go to bed only when you feel very tired. don't lie awake in bed continually going over your thoughts
27. Adopt a bedtime routine
28. Keep a positive outlook and — BELIEVE IN YOUR RECOVERY!

### AND, MOST OF ALL, DON'T FORGET TO TAKE CARE OF - YOU!!

A MILD TBI is not a disease and, for most people, the symptoms are going to diminish and disappear within three months. There is no connection between a TBI and a stroke, an aneurysm or a tumor in the brain. One is in no way the cause of the other.

If you had any bleeding in the brain with your TBI, that blood will be naturally reabsorbed by the body and, on average, disappear within the first six weeks.

Use these suggested tips to try to reduce your level of anxiety and stress, because these emotions can intensify your symptoms.

This pamphlet was prepared because, in addition to you, there are many people who have had a MILD TBI and one or more of the symptoms that followed. These symptoms are common and, in the majority of cases, they gradually disappear.

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