What Happens When a Baby Bumps Its Head?

Parent Handout 1

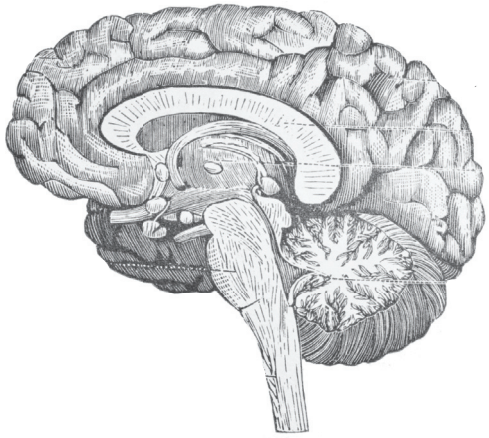
A child's brain develops rapidly in the first few years of life. The brain has billions of tiny brain cells. Neurons are "communicator" cells that talk to each other. Inside the head or skull is a hard rough bony and pointy edged surface that touches the soft gelatin consistency of the brain. Forceful shaking, tossing or a blow to the head can cause movement of the soft brain tissue against the hard rough edges of the skull resulting in shearing, twisting or tearing of brain tissue -- including neurons. This is a traumatic brain injury (TBI).

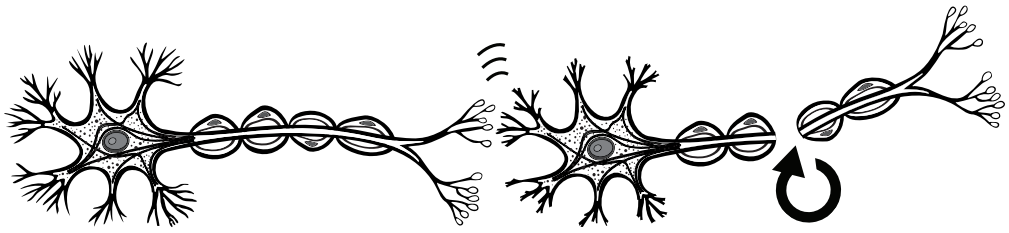
Evaluation of the child by a healthcare professional trained in the evaluation of brain injury is important. Reporting how the injury occurred, the force of the blow, where the head hit and any symptoms the child experienced after the injury will assist the health care professional make an accurate diagnosis.

A TBI can change or cause delays in a child's future development as the brain grows and matures. Tears and bleeding in the brain may cause changes in the brain that keep the neurons from talking to each other as they are developing. Small tears all over the brain can prevent the neuronal networks from communicating efficiently.

Signs and symptoms of a TBI may not manifest immediately. So, it is important to communicate to all caregivers and teachers that a child has experienced a blow to the head. Effective communication ensures careful monitoring of signs and symptoms by all caregivers.

It is important that when an infant or child injures their brain that the potential injury is remembered as the child continues to develop. The brain is fully matured around age 25. Because implications of a TBI may not be realized until the injured part of the brain begins to mature, parents, caregivers and educators need to remember that if developmental delays occur it may be related to a possible TBI.





Healthy Neuron **Broken Neuron**

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