

Talking to Your Patients: A Clinician's Guide to Treating Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

Your patients trust you. That's why hearing from you *directly* about mild traumatic brain injury, or mild TBI, can ease their concerns and help speed recovery.

A mild TBI can manifest in a variety of ways, including difficulty concentrating, dizziness, and trouble falling asleep.

Assure patients that most people with mild TBI recover quickly and fully. At the same time, be sure to instruct them on what they need to expect, observe, and do after they're discharged.

Here are some steps you can take to help ensure that your patients are prepared after they leave your care.

Identify the Danger Signs. Tell your patients that if they experience a worsening or severe headache; have repeated vomiting or slurred speech; seizures; numbness; or are getting more and more confused, agitated, or drowsy, that they need to return to the emergency department *immediately*.

Talk About Postconcussive Symptoms. Walk patients through what they should expect and let them know that their symptoms are a normal part of the healing process and will improve over time.

Recommend Rest and Limited Activity. Remind patients that getting plenty of rest is essential to recovery, and that *normal* activities, such as work and household chores, should be reincorporated *gradually*. Ask them to limit demanding physical activities, especially sports, and point out that even concentrating hard on something, such as reading, can tax the brain and slow recovery time. Tell them to avoid activities that put them at risk of sustaining another concussion. Make it clear that a repeat concussion can be dangerous and may lead to long-term problems.

Offer Support. Encourage patients to talk about their injury, whether it's with you, their family, or friends, so they have a support network during the healing process.

Empower Them. Give each patient a discharge instruction sheet to take home and share with their family and/or caregiver, and encourage them to contact you or another healthcare provider if they have questions or concerns.

Visit www.cdc.gov/concussion to download a patient discharge instruction sheet and get more information about diagnosing and managing patients with mild TBI.

For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.