



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Protect Your Brain

Brain Injury Awareness Month – March, 2013

Recorded: March 19, 2013; posted: March 21, 2013

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Bowen] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm Dr. Anna Bowen, filling in for your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Recent high-profile cases among professional athletes have called attention to the serious problem of traumatic brain injuries, or TBI, but the problem isn't limited to playing fields. In 2009, at least three and a half million people in the US sustained a TBI, either with or without other injuries.

Dr. Lisa McGuire is a researcher with the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of early diagnosis and treatment of brain injuries. Welcome to the show, Lisa.

[Dr. McGuire] Hello.

[Dr. Bowen] Lisa, what is a traumatic brain injury?

[Dr. McGuire] A traumatic brain injury is an injury that disrupts the normal function of the brain that can be caused by a bump, blow, jolt to the head, or an object that penetrates the skull.

[Dr. Bowen] What are the leading causes of TBI?

[Dr. McGuire] TBIs don't just occur on the sports field. They can occur in your home, such as a slip in the tub. The most common causes of traumatic brain injury are falls, which we see in pre-school age kids and older adults; motor vehicle crashes, which are more common in newer drivers and older adults; and being struck by or against an object, which we see more in young kids and teens. Assaults are across the entire population.

[Dr. Bowen] What are the symptoms of a TBI?

[Dr. McGuire] A TBI is a brain injury, but it's important to know that loss of consciousness does not need to be present for someone to have a traumatic brain injury. Some of the common symptoms that people show after they have a head injury are difficulty thinking clearly, concentrating, remembering new information; they might have a headache, nausea, or vomiting, and be sensitive to light or noise.

[Dr. Bowen] How is a TBI managed?

[Dr. McGuire] When a TBI is suspected, seek medical attention immediately. Rest is very important after concussion because it helps the brain to heal. It's important to avoid physically demanding activities, such as athletics or even working in your garden or yard. Also avoid sustained computer use, and this also includes video games. Ignoring the symptoms and trying to 'tough it out' often makes the symptoms worse. Be patient because your brain healing does take time.

[Dr. Bowen] What kinds of long-term problems can result from a TBI?

[Dr. McGuire] The majority of TBIs get better and people usually fully recover, but a TBI can lead to a long-term disability. Some of the disabilities that TBI survivors have can be issues with mobility, thinking, planning, reasoning (or memory), or also challenges interacting with other people socially. It's important to recognize and respond to the signs and symptoms of a traumatic brain injury and seek medical attention to help minimize potential long-term disability. People who have one traumatic brain injury are at risk for additional traumatic brain injuries, and multiple traumatic brain injuries decrease the likelihood of a complete recovery.

[Dr. Bowen] How can traumatic brain injuries be prevented?

[Dr. McGuire] Most traumatic brain injuries can be avoided. One way is to decrease the severity of motor vehicle crashes. When you get into your car, make sure that all occupants have their seat belts on and that children are in their safety seats. A second way is to prevent falls. For children, remove fall hazards from the home. This can include installing safety gates at the top and bottom of the stairs and also supervising children during play. Encourage older adults to improve their balance and coordination by exercising. Prevent TBI in sports by teaching and practicing safe playing techniques, encourage athletes to follow the rules of the game or play and good sportsmanship at all times, and make sure that all athletes are wearing the appropriate protective equipment for their sport.

[Dr. Bowen] Where can listeners get more information about TBI?

[Dr. McGuire] More information can be found at cdc.gov/tbi.

[Dr. Bowen] Thanks, Lisa. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Lisa McGuire about traumatic brain injuries.

Early diagnosis and treatment of TBI is important to prevent long-term problems. If you or someone you know has suffered a blow to the head, seek treatment immediately.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Anna Bowen for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.