



Head Injury

eSafetyLine

What Is a Head Injury?

Every year, millions in the construction industry sustain a head injury. Most of these injuries are minor because the bony skull provides the brain with considerable protection. The symptoms of minor head injuries usually go away on their own. More than half a million head injuries a year, however, are severe enough to require hospitalization. Being able to recognize a head injury, determine how serious it is and implementing basic first aid, can make the difference in saving a coworker's life. The problem is that the symptoms of minor head injuries will usually go away even if untreated, so how do you know when you should go to the doctor or call 911.

A head injury is typically described as any trauma to the head that leads to injury of the scalp, skull and more specifically the brain. Two common classifications for head injuries are closed, which means you've received a hard hit to the head by something and open, which means you were hit by an object that broke the skull and entered the brain. An open head injury usually happens when you or an object are moving at high speed. Common causes are car accidents or a heavy object (like a hammer) falling from a height (like a ladder).

Two of the more common types of head injuries are:

- Concussion, where there has been a jarring injury to the brain. Someone with a concussion may pass out for a short while. The individual may also feel dazed and may lose vision or balance for some time after the injury.
- Brain Contusion is a bruise of the brain. This means that the injury has caused some bleeding in the brain that causes swelling.

Signs of any type of head injury may occur immediately after the injury or develop slowly over several hours. Even if the head looks fine the brain may

have been banged against the bones of the skull. When someone has just had a bang to the head, they may not be able to describe what happened, look for clues or ask if anyone witnessed the event. If a head injury has occurred it is always safe to assume that the spinal cord is also involved. The following symptoms suggest that the individual may have a serious head injury:

- Loss of consciousness, confusion or drowsiness
- Low breathing rate
- Convulsions
- Bruising or swelling at the injury site or a scalp wound
- Fluid drainage from the nose, mouth or ears. It may be clear or bloody.
- Severe headache
- Initial improvement followed by the symptoms getting worse
- Restlessness, clumsiness, lack of coordination
- Slurred speech or blurred vision
- Pupil of the eyes change
- Inability to move one or more limbs

If someone that has received a head injury has one or more of these symptoms, medical attention should be sought immediately, preferably calling 911. This is a situation where you want to fault on the side of caution to prevent any possible long-term or permanent damage. If the individual doesn't have these symptoms, but did receive a blow to the head, they should be seen by a doctor immediately, however emergency services may not be needed.

Discussion Questions

What is the difference between a concussion and a contusion?

List three symptoms of someone with a head injury that needs emergency medical attention.

MEETING / TRAINING ATTENDANCE ROSTER

COMPANY: _____

_____ SAFETY MEETING

JOB/DEPT: _____

_____ SAFETY TRAINING

DATE: ___/___/_____

TIME: _____

TOPICS ADDRESSED: _____

EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURES

_____	_____	_____
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EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: _____

ACTION TAKEN: _____

Supervisor's Signature

_____/_____/_____
Date

Safety Coordinator's Signature

_____/_____/_____
Date