

The Missouri Greenbook

Living with Brain Injury



A guide for survivors, families and caregivers



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Sometimes bleeding occurs, which results in additional damage to the surrounding brain tissue. In most injuries, the brain responds by swelling. Since the brain is enclosed by the rigid skull, swelling in one area can result in pressure and additional damage to the surrounding areas.

Skull fractures, or breaks in the bone surrounding the brain, may occur with or without damage to the underlying brain. The bone itself will heal over time. Additional treatment may be required if there is damage to the brain beneath the fracture.

Concussion is the mildest form of brain injury. When a person has a concussion he or she may pass out or lose consciousness for a short time, or experience memory loss or loss of other brain functions briefly. Treatment is usually not necessary, however, it is important to observe the patient closely for signs that a more severe injury has occurred.

In a **contusion**, a part of the brain is bruised and develops small areas of bleeding and swelling that can be seen on tests. Patients with contusions often complain of headaches, nausea and slow

thinking. Patients with contusions must be watched closely for signs of additional swelling, bleeding or further injury of the brain.

Sometimes opposite sides of the brain are injured when the brain first strikes one side of the skull during the impact and then bounces back against the opposite side of the skull. This is called a **coup contrecoup** injury (Figure 3).

A generalized injury to the brain can occur when stretching or shearing forces are applied to the entire brain. This can result

Figure 3

