Traumatic Brain Injury in Road Traffic Accidents

AUTHOR / KEY CONTACT

Fiona Brooke
Associate

fiona.brooke@la-law.com
01202 786296

It is Action for Brain Injury Week and today we are taking a more detailed look into Traumatic Brain Injuries caused by Road Traffic Accidents and the differences between a head injury and a brain injury.

Head Injury

By definition, a *head injury* is an injury to the skull. Our skulls are designed to protect our brains. We have a layer of hair, scalp, skull, and several layers inside the skull to safeguard the brain. Even a direct impact which would cause injury to your scalp or skull would not result in your brain being injured.

Brain Injury

A *brain injury*, on the other hand, can be the result of a head injury. Although the skull may not be injured, the brain is jostled back and forth inside the skull in a force strong enough to cause shearing and tearing of the nerves in the brain.

Of all types of injury, ones to the head and specifically to the brain are among the most likely to result in death or permanent disability. Road Traffic Accidents (RTA) are a common cause of head injury, with between 40% and 50% of all brain injuries being due to the person being involved in a crash whether in a car, on a bike or walking.

A Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) occurs when a sudden trauma causes damage to the brain such as a blow to the head. These take two forms:

1. Coup Injury – these injuries are present on the brain directly below the site of the impact. The surface bruises and cuts, contusions or other marks can help to pinpoint the location. Trauma can range from relatively mild to severe including bruising, swelling and haemorrhaging of the brain. Such injuries do not necessarily require penetration of the brain.

2. Contrecoup Injury - these injuries affect the side of the brain opposite from where impact occurred. They are often overlooked or misdiagnosed because of their location. Contrecoup occurs when a force or blow causes the brain to strike the side of the skull opposite from the point of impact.

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These injuries often occur in motor vehicle rollover accidents and motorcycle crashes. If not identified, they pose long term risks for victims.

A Traumatic Brain Injury can result when the moving head suddenly and violently hits an object (a contra coup injury), or when an object pierces the skull and enters brain tissue.

Symptoms of a Traumatic Brain Injury can be mild, moderate, or severe, depending on the extent of the damage to the brain. A person with a mild Traumatic Brain Injury may remain conscious or may experience a loss of consciousness for a few seconds or minutes.

Other symptoms of mild Traumatic Brain Injury include:

- Headaches
- Confusion
- Light-headedness
- Dizziness
- Blurred vision or tired eyes
- Ringing in the ears
- Bad taste in the mouth
- Fatigue or lethargy
- Change in sleep patterns
- Behavioural or mood changes
- Trouble with memory, concentration, attention, or thinking.

A person with a moderate or severe Traumatic Brain Injury may show these same symptoms, but may also have: a headache that gets worse or does not go away, repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions or seizures, an inability to awaken from sleep, dilation of one or both pupils of the eyes, slurred speech, weakness or numbness in the extremities, loss of coordination, and increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation.

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Post-concussion syndrome (PCS)

Post Concussion Syndrome is a set of symptoms that may continue for weeks, months, or a year or more after a concussion (a mild form of Traumatic Brain Injury). About 15% of individuals with a history of a single concussion develop persistent symptoms associated with the injury.

How can we help you?

A severe head injury is life changing. It can affect not only movement but also cognitive function. Those affected may develop epilepsy, have speech problems and develop behavioural problems.

Where a Traumatic Brain Injury has resulted from a Road Traffic Accident as a result of another person's negligence, a compensation claim may exist. At Lester Aldridge, our Personal Injury solicitors have a clear understanding of the complex issues which arise in any brain injury case. We use that expertise and our first class claim handling service to help secure compensation and rebuild lives.

Under the Rehabilitation Code, the at-fault party has a duty to assist with your rehabilitation and provide the necessary funding for it. At Lester Aldridge we can assist by nominating chosen rehabilitation agencies and ask the at-fault party to fund an Initial Needs Assessment report by one of these agencies, so your needs are assessed right from the start. We may also appoint a Case Manager at this stage, to help with implementing the recommendations.

If one of your friends or family has suffered a brain injury, and you are concerned about the events that caused the injury or the treatment they received, our Personal Injury team can assist on 0344 967 0793 or online.enquiries@la-law.com

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