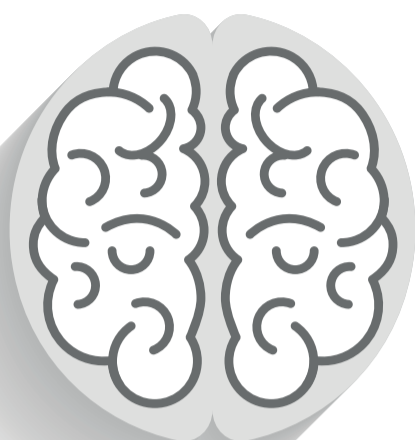


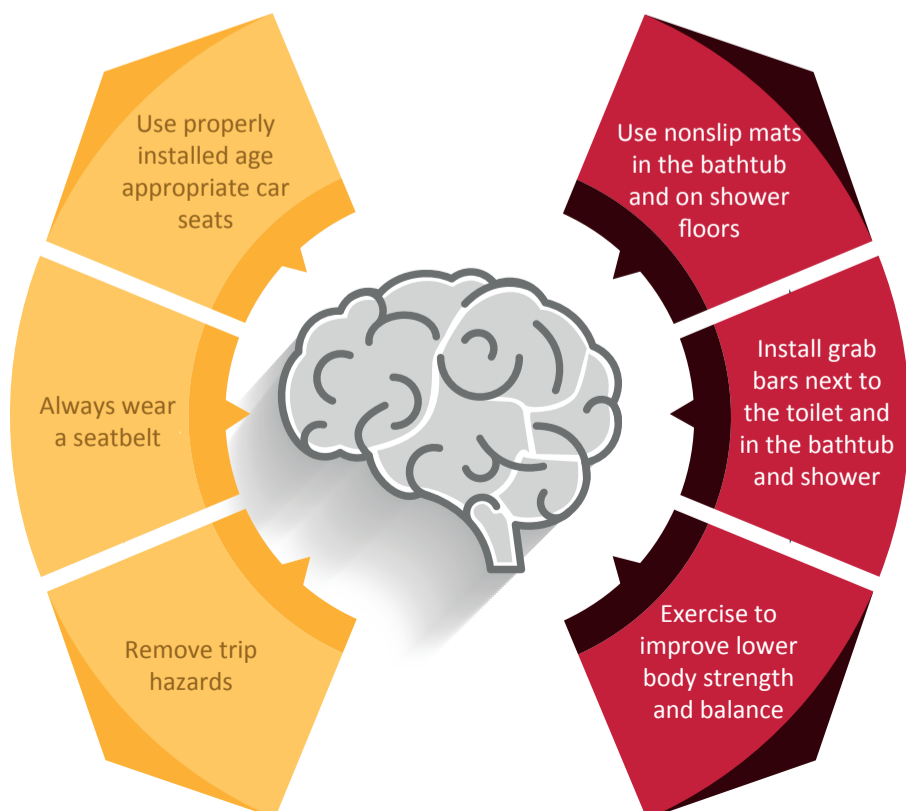
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What are the symptoms?



How to prevent or minimize brain injuries



Questions

for Dr Thapelo Motshudi

1 What is a traumatic brain injury?

A Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) occurs when one suffers a blow, bump, or sudden jolt to the head, causing the brain to bounce around within the skull. This happens because the brain is not fixed to the inside of the skull, instead it “floats” in fluid called cerebrospinal fluid (CSF). The injury can be mild, leading to what is called a concussion, or it can be severe, causing permanent irreversible brain damage. However, even though a concussion is considered mild, its effects can still be serious and long lasting. It’s very important to note that even a significant blow to the body can be responsible for a TBI, if it causes the head to quickly move back and forth, banging against the inside of the skull.

2 What are some of the common causes and risk factors?

- Falls
- Being struck on the head during an assault
- Contact sport

3 What are the symptoms?

Some signs and symptoms of a concussion show themselves immediately after the injury and others can take days. For that reason, it is very important to continue looking for symptoms days after the injury, even if the initial injury did not appear to be serious.

Other symptoms include:

- Confusion straight after the injury
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness, no matter how brief
- Change in mood or behaviour
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness and bothered by light or noise

If anyone displays the following danger signs after a head injury take them to an emergency unit immediately:

- One pupil larger than the other
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, restlessness, unusual behavior, decreased coordination, and fitting
- If a child does not stop crying, cannot be consoled and will not eat

4 How to prevent or minimize brain injuries

- Use properly installed age and size appropriate car seats and booster seats for children
- Always wear a seatbelt, even while sitting in the back of a car
- Cyclists and those participating in contact sports should wear helmets where appropriate
- Have a concussion reporting protocol in sport teams
- Remove trip hazards such as throw rugs and clutter in walkways
- Use nonslip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors
- Install grab bars next to the toilet and in the bathtub and shower
- Install handrails on both sides of stairways
- Improve lighting throughout the home
- Exercise to improve lower body strength and balance

5 What to do in case of a TBI?

For sport related injuries it is critical that the child or adult stops playing immediately to avoid worsening the problem. The duration of rest will vary depending on the severity of the injury and it is generally advisable to wait for a healthcare professional to give the go-ahead first before returning to full activity.

In the case of motor vehicle accidents or assaults ensure that you are safe first before proceeding to help the next person, and contact emergency services or call for help before proceeding to do anything. Once in hospital, specialized tests will be performed to assess the extent of the injury, including brain scans and evaluation of memory and other cognitive functions.