PROTECTING THE TEENAGE BRAIN

A Fact Sheet for HIGH SCHOOL PARENTS

Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut

What is Brain Injury?

Brain injury is caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head or by a hit to the body that disrupts brain function. Not all blows and jolts to the head result in brain injury. Brain injury includes the term **concussion** which has gained increasing attention in the past several years. Brain injury also includes injuries to the brain caused by loss of oxygen to the brain (through near drowning), infections (such as meningitis or encephalitis), brain tumors, stroke and toxic exposures.

Did You Know?

Brain injury is the leading cause of injury and death in young people in Connecticut. The Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut is committed to the prevention of brain injury through raising awareness about brain injury and its prevention, particularly in our youth.

How Does Brain Injury Affect You?

Brain injury can cause a wide range of functional short or long-term changes affecting thinking, sensations, language, or emotions.

* Motor issues (how we move)
* Cognition & Thinking (memory & reasoning)
* Sensation (touch, taste, and smell)
* Language (communication, understanding)
* Emotions & Behavior (depression, anxiety, impulsive, agitation)

Brain Injury Alliance CONNECTICUT

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Connecticut's partner in brain injury prevention & recovery for more than 30 years.

How Can I Keep My Teen Safe?

To help lower your teen's chances of getting a concussion or other serious brain injury, you should encourage a culture of safety in your family.

* **Buckle Up:** Despite the fact that wearing a seat belt increases your risk of surviving a crash by 75% teens buckle up far less frequently than adults. Buckling up in the backseat is just as important, as unbelted passengers continue to move at the speed of the vehicle they are riding in until they hit something.
* **Just Drive:** Drivers looking out the windshield can ***miss seeing up to 50%*** of what's around them when talking on any kind of a cell phone, including hands free. Distractions while driving can be visual, manual or cognitive, so put down the phone, the food, the brush or whatever else is distracting you and JUST DRIVE!
* **Graduated Driving License (GDL):** The GDL is a period of supervised driving before getting a basic driver license that introduces driving privileges in stages – providing an opportunity to gain experience and practice. Connecticut has a long-standing history of involvement with the Graduated Driver's License and is considered a national leader in this area. Since 2004, Connecticut has seen an 84% drop in teen driver fatalities due to the GDL. Learn more about and encourage the GDL in your family.
* **Safe Cycling:** Always wear a helmet, and encourage each family member to wear a helmet—regardless of their age. In Connecticut, anyone 15 years of age or younger must wear a bike helmet but remember that the risk of brain injury does not reduce on your 16th birthday.
* **Walk This Way:** A teen pedestrian is injured or killed after being struck by a car every hour in the US. Discourage distracted walking, always cross at corners, stop on the curb and look both ways, and **make eye contact with the driver** (never assume they see you).
* **Don't Play Games with Concussions:** Teens who continue to play after experiencing a concussion, or return to play before their brain is fully healed, have a greater chance of getting another concussion. A repeat concussion that occurs while the brain is still healing can be serious or even fatal. Sports are an important way to stay healthy and recognize the importance of teamwork and collaboration. Learning how to identify, treat and manage concussions can keep your teen safe.

PROTECT YOUR BRAIN

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To learn more,
go to www.biact.org/protectyourbrain