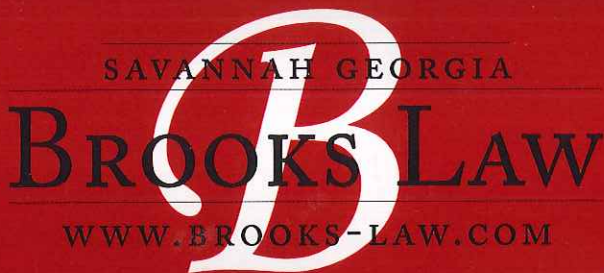


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FALL 2015

## THE BRAIN

The human brain, both amazing and complicated, is our largest internal organ. Composed of billions of neurons, it controls conscious and subconscious activity. It perceives through the human senses and reacts within microseconds. It operates our internal organs and allows us to sleep and wake. It provides our personality, emotions, and imagination.

Different areas of the brain control different activities. The brain stem operates our internal organs. Differing sides of the brain control rational and intuitive thoughts. The back of the brain perceives sight, and the front of the brain controls judgment. This edition of our newsletter focuses on brain injury, an event that can literally change someone.

### Known causes of brain injuries

Brain injury can occur in a variety of ways. When resulting from a closed head injury, the injury may not be

immediately apparent. A concussion, bruising of the brain, is the most common closed head injury. We are learning that repeated concussions, which may be suffered by football players, soldiers, or shaken babies, among others, may cause permanent brain injury. Anytime someone suffers a loss of consciousness, he or she should be examined and followed for residual damage. Sometimes the brain heals without any significant problems; other times, significant disability results.

Nearly two million Americans suffer traumatic brain injury annually. Car wrecks are one of the primary causes of permanent brain injury. Brain injuries can occur when a person's skull strikes an object at full force—for example, a steering wheel, dashboard, or windshield. An open wound to the skull may or may not occur. The skull does not need to be penetrated or fractured for the brain's soft tissue to suffer injury. For instance, blunt force on any part of a person's head can cause the brain to collide against the skull's hard bone, injuring the opposite side of the brain that suffered the blow. The brain's tissues are injured when the skull suddenly stops but the brain continues in its movement, striking against the skull's hard interior surface on the opposite side. This type of brain injury can occur without direct head trauma, as the head quickly moves forward and backward, injuring the brain tissue as it bangs against the skull. This injury is called a contre-coup injury and is well known in the medical literature.

A contre-coup brain injury can result in a concussion or a contusion, bleeding (when the brain hemorrhages) that causes brain swelling. Headaches are common when either occurs.

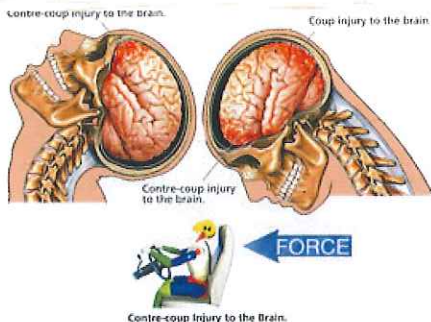
Industrial solvents can also damage the brain. The brain's cells are mostly fat cells and are particularly susceptible to chemicals that are fat soluble. These chemicals can cross the blood-brain barrier and damage the neurons.

Also, lack of oxygen may damage the brain—for example, when it is overexposed to carbon monoxide or deprived of oxygen during birth. Brain tissue dies when deprived of oxygen. Also, lead is neurotoxic and can decrease cognitive ability, particularly in young children.

### Symptoms of brain injuries

Brain injuries are serious. The diagnosis of any head injury should be made quickly. When

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## THE BRAIN *(continued from front)*

brain injury goes undetected or treatment is delayed, it can result in serious complications or death. For instance, when someone is dazed after a car wreck, they should be carefully watched. Other symptoms include anxiety, blurred vision, coordination difficulty, headaches, nausea, physical weakness, sensory difficulties, sleeplessness, and uncharacteristic social interaction. Family members are often the first to recognize these symptoms, particularly those manifesting a personality change. A person may become emotionally unstable or may stop exhibiting any emotion.

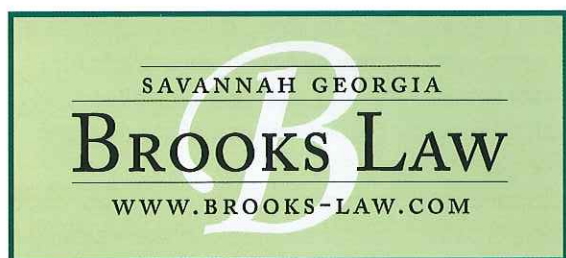
A person's symptoms will depend on which part of the brain suffered damage. For example, lack of judgment or uncharacteristic rudeness can result from frontal brain damage. This type of damage can affect a person's employability. A

person may also suffer profound or extensive fatigue because he or she must strain to concentrate when performing physical or cognitive activities that were not previously difficult. Brain injury may or may not be reversible and might require a lifetime commitment to rehabilitation. A brain-damaged person may require the commitment of caretakers, changing the lives of the injured person's family and loved ones.

### Diagnosis of brain injuries

If you or anyone close to you has suffered a head injury, particularly if it involved loss of consciousness for any amount of time, and still complains of headaches, processing problems, or fatigue, or undergoes a personality change, then that person

*(continued below)*



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## THE BRAIN *(continued from above)*

should be examined. Imaging studies, such as PET (positron emission tomography) scans, are becoming increasingly better at detecting brain injury. A PET scan creates a 3-D image of the brain and images the brain's metabolic activity. MRIs can show signs of interior brain bleeding. Neuropsychological testing can compare a person's mental ability before and after an injury.

### What to do if you suffer a brain injury

If you or a loved one has suffered a brain injury, these are the steps that should be taken:

- 1) Seek immediate medical care.
- 2) Provide your doctor with as much information as possible.
- 3) Keep notes of observed difficulties  
(a calendar is good for this).

No one expects to get hurt, and treatment for brain injury is tremendously expensive.

**Brooks Law Office** is experienced in handling brain injury claims. These claims require the collection of necessary evidence to prove the injury, the cause of the injury, the extent of the injury, and the future medical, therapeutic, and financial needs of the injured person. Contact Brooks Law Office if you have further questions.  
***We work every day to help our clients regain their lives.***

