



HSE National Patient Safety Alert

Clinical Governance of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) in non Neuro-Surgical Centres (all acute hospitals) (003/2024)

What does it mean for me as a patient or family member?

About HSE National Patient Safety Alerts

HSE *National Patient Safety Alerts* (NPSA) are high-priority communications about patient safety issues, which require HSE services and HSE funded agencies to take specific action within an identified timeframe. NPSAs are developed with relevant people including subject matter experts and patient representatives.

What is the safety issue?



A Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is a type of injury that happens when a sudden trauma (e.g. following an injury or accident) causes damage to a person's brain.

In Ireland there are two specialist Neuro-Surgical Centres, one in Beaumont Hospital, Dublin and one in Cork University Hospital. They provide care for patients with disorders and injuries which affect the nervous system, including the brain and spinal cord. However patients with a TBI can present at and be cared for at any acute hospital.

As a patient or family / relevant person you need to be reassured that regardless of where you are being cared for that the care is safe, accessible and delivered to a consistently high standard.

An alert is being issued to instruct hospital services to have robust:

1. Clinical governance arrangements for your continuous care including that you have a named responsible Consultant at all times to oversee and continually plan and monitor your care. Clinical governance are agreed processes that outlines how healthcare teams are accountable for the quality, safety and satisfaction of patients in relation to the care they deliver.
2. Up-to-date and evidence based policies and procedures for;
 - Managing patients with a TBI and responding to any signs of deterioration (patient's condition is getting worse)
 - How and when to refer a patient to Critical / Intensive Care and the Neuro-Surgical Centres
 - How to coordinate on-going care for patients with a TBI in an acute hospital where the patient is not transferred to a Neuro-Surgical Centre
 - Listening to and responding to concerns about the patient's condition from:
 - patients, and in particular their family or relevant person
 - other staff (i.e. nursing staff)
3. Effective clinical handover processes, where the care of a patient or group of patients is transferred to another doctor or healthcare team. This includes at the end of their shift, during out of hours care (night duty, weekends, bank holidays), between departments and between hospitals.

More information on the above can be found on page 6 of the associated HSE NPSA (003/2024).



Why was this alert issued?

A HSE NPSA (003/2024) was issued following a patient safety review, its subsequent recommendations and from evidence of some inconsistencies in clinical governance arrangements in the care and treatment of patients with a TBI.

The alert highlights key actions and learnings for healthcare staff on the management of patients with TBI including recommendations for clinical governance and clinical handover.

What should I look for?

If a person has had trauma to their head following a fall, an accident, an assault or an injury, signs and symptoms that they may have a TBI include:

- an obvious injury to their head area, which may or may not be bleeding
- vomiting since the injury
- where they were unconscious, knocked out and haven't woken up
- difficulty staying awake or keeping their eyes open
- had a fit (seizure)
- problems with their vision or dizziness
- clear fluid coming from their ears or nose
- bleeding from their ears or bruising behind their ears
- numbness or weakness in part of their body
- problems with walking, balance, understanding, speaking or writing

If you suspect a TBI go to the Emergency Department or **call 999 or 112** for assistance.

For further information, visit <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/head-injury-concussion/>

What do I have to do?



If you are being treated for a TBI or suspected TBI, your healthcare team will have been provided with the alert and the correct guidance to take care of you. If you are worried, you should be listened to and your concerns taken seriously. Therefore, if you have any queries or concerns please speak with your own local healthcare team.



Where can I get more information?



To see the full alert and for queries on this or any HSE NPSA visit www.hse.ie/pst/ or email patientsafetytogether@hse.ie

