

THE FIRST 72 HOURS AFTER A TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

WHAT CAREGIVERS NEED TO KNOW (BUT NO ONE EXPLAINS)



A traumatic brain injury changes everything—suddenly. The first 72 hours are often filled with uncertainty, fragmented information, and decisions that feel urgent but unclear.

This guide is not meant to turn you into a medical expert. It's meant to help you focus on what actually matters right now.

WHAT MATTERS MOST IN THE FIRST 72 HOURS

Stability matters more than certainty. It is common not to have clear answers early on. Imaging may look normal. Symptoms may change hour to hour. This does not mean nothing is wrong.

Behavior is information. Changes in mood, confusion, agitation, sleep, or awareness are important—even if no one calls them that. Simply notice and document changes.

Your presence matters. A calm, familiar presence helps regulate an injured brain. Even quiet support makes a difference.

QUESTIONS WORTH ASKING

- What symptoms should be reported immediately?
- What changes are expected—and what are not?
- Who is the best point of contact if something feels off?
- What should be avoided right now to protect the brain?
- When will the next reassessment occur?

WHAT NOT TO WORRY ABOUT YET

There will be time to think about long-term recovery, therapy options, work or school planning, and insurance or legal questions. The first 72 hours are not that time.

Your role right now is not to solve the future. It's to support the present.

A NOTE TO CAREGIVERS

If this moment feels heavy, that makes sense. You didn't miss something. You didn't fail to prepare. You are responding to something sudden and complex.