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Is Head Injury A Predictor Of Parkinson's?

Are people who have sustained a previous head injury at greater risk of neurologic disease?

Yes, according to Mayo Clinic researchers, who found that individuals who've had a head injury are four times more likely to develop Parkinson's disease than those who've never suffered a brain injury. If the head injury required hospitalization, the risk is eight-fold. A severe head injury creates an 11-fold risk of Parkinson's. The researchers say that the average head trauma occurs approximately 20 years before onset of disease.

Reasons for the link between the two are not clear. The researchers, however, hypothesize that the head trauma sparks a series of events that lead to brain cell death at the time of injury and down the road. They also suggest that the head injury may allow certain proteins or poisons to enter the bloodstream, thus setting the groundwork for Parkinson's.

In order to avoid the immediate and potential repercussions of a head injury, caution your patients to use head protection while riding bikes, playing soccer, or participating in other sports that carry an increased risk of head injury.

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