



HEALTH INFORMATION

Concussion

Concussion is the sudden but short-lived loss of mental function that occurs after a blow or other injury to the head.

You don't have to pass out (lose consciousness) to have a concussion. Some people will have obvious symptoms of a concussion such as passing out or forgetting what happened right before the injury. But other people won't.

Other symptoms include:-

- loss of consciousness after the head injury
- periods of memory loss
- disturbances in vision, such as "seeing stars" or blurry vision
- a period of confusion, a blank expression, or a delay in answering questions immediately after the head injury

With rest, most people fully recover from a concussion. Some people recover within a few hours. Other people take a few weeks to recover.

When to seek medical help

Concussion should only be diagnosed by a health professional trained in assessing patients with head injury. They will be able to rule out serious brain injury that needs a brain scan or surgery.

You should visit your nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department if you or someone in your care has a head injury and develops the following signs and symptoms:

- loss of consciousness, however brief
- memory loss, such as not being able to remember what happened before or after the injury
- persistent headaches since the injury
- Changes in behaviour, such as irritability, being easily distracted or having no interest in the outside world .
- confusion
- drowsiness that occurs when you would normally be awake

- loss of balance or problems walking
- difficulties with understanding what people say
- difficulty speaking, such as slurred speech
- problems with reading or writing
- vomiting since the injury
- problems with vision, such as double vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- loss of power in part of the body, such as weakness in an arm or leg
- clear fluid leaving the nose or ears (this could be cerebrospinal fluid, which surrounds the brain)
- sudden deafness in one or both ears
- any wound to the head or face

Phone 999 for an ambulance immediately if the person:

- remains unconscious after the initial injury
- is having a seizure or fit
- is bleeding from one or both ears
- has been vomiting since the injury
- is having difficulty staying awake, speaking, or understanding what people are saying

Certain things make you more vulnerable to the effects of a head injury. These include:

- being aged 65 or older
- having previously had brain surgery
- having a condition that makes you bleed more easily, such as haemophilia

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- having a condition that makes your blood more prone to clotting, such as thrombophilia
- taking anticoagulant medication, such as warfarin or aspirin, to prevent blood clots

Concussions in older adults can also be dangerous. This is because concussions in older adults are often missed. If you are caring for an older adult who has had a fall, check him or her for symptoms of a concussion. Signs of a serious problem include a headache that gets worse or increasing confusion or both. See a doctor right away if you notice these signs. If you are caring for an older adult who takes blood thinners-warfarin is an example-and who has had a fall, take him or her to a doctor right away, even if you don't see any symptoms of a concussion.

There are things you can do at home to help relieve concussion symptoms, including:

- apply a cold compress to the injury to reduce swelling – a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a towel will do
- take paracetamol to control any pain – do not use non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen or aspirin, as these can cause bleeding
- avoid drinking alcohol or taking recreational drugs

In the days or weeks after

Some people feel normal again in a few hours. Others have symptoms for weeks or months. It is very important to allow yourself time to get better and to slowly return to your regular activities. If your symptoms come back when you are doing an activity, stop and rest for a day. This is a sign that you are pushing yourself too hard. It is also important to call your doctor if you are not improving as expected or if you think that you are getting worse instead of better.

Rest is the best way to recover from a concussion. You need to rest your body and your brain. Here are some tips to help you get better:

- Get plenty of sleep at night, and take it easy during the day.
- Avoid alcohol and illegal drugs.
- Do not take any other medicines unless your doctor says it is okay.
- Avoid activities that are physically or mentally demanding (including housework, exercise, schoolwork, video games, text messaging, or using the computer). You may need to change your work schedule while you recover.
- Ask your doctor when it's okay for you to drive a car, ride a bike, or operate machinery.
- Use ice or a cold pack on any swelling for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.

It's important to know that after a concussion the brain is more sensitive to damage. So while you are recovering, be sure to avoid activities that might injure you again.

Post concussion syndrome

Sometimes after a concussion you may feel as if you are not functioning as well as you did before the injury. This is called post concussive syndrome. New symptoms may develop, or you may continue to be bothered by symptoms from the injury, such as:

- Changes in your ability to think, concentrate, or remember.
- Headaches or blurry vision.
- Changes in your sleep patterns, such as not being able to sleep or sleeping all the time.
- Changes in your personality such as becoming angry or anxious for no clear reason.
- Lack of interest in your usual activities.
- Changes in your sex drive.
- Dizziness, light headedness, or unsteadiness that makes standing or walking difficult.

If you have symptoms of post concussive syndrome, call your doctor.

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