

## Concussion: What to Do if You Think You Have One?

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Concussion is the most common and sometimes serious type of brain injury. It is most often caused by a sudden direct blow or bump to the head. Concussion can happen during sports, car and bicycle accidents, work-related injuries, falls, and fighting. The brain is made of soft tissue. It is cushioned by spinal fluid and encased in the protective shell of the skull. When one sustains a concussion, the impact can jolt one's brain. Sometimes, it literally causes it to move around in the head. This can cause bruising, damage to the blood vessels, and injury to the nerves.

### SIGNS OF A CONCUSSION:

Concussions are tricky. It is difficult to say for sure if one has a concussion. That's why one needs to see a doctor. For some problems, the person should go right to a hospital emergency room. For other problems, a call can be placed to the doctor for advice about what to do next.

### Go to a hospital for these symptoms:

Loss of consciousness (knocked out), severe headache, including a headache that gets worse, blurred vision, trouble walking, confusion and saying things that don't make sense, slurred speech, unresponsive (can't be woken up).

### One should call the doctor right away for these symptoms after getting hit in the head:

Vomiting, dizziness, headache and trouble concentrating.

### IMPORTANT STEPS TO TAKE:

- An adult should monitor you for the first 24 hours. It's important to watch for behavioral changes.
- Do not give medications, including aspirin, which may cause bleeding.
- If concussion was sustained during athletic activity, stop play and sit it out. Brain needs time to properly heal, so rest is key.
- Do not resume play the same day. If play is resumed too soon, there is a greater chance of having a second concussion, which can compound the damage.
- Repeat concussions cause cumulative effects on the brain. Successive concussions can cause brain swelling, permanent brain damage, long-term disabilities, or even death. Victims are advised to not to return to normal activities if still have symptoms. Get a doctor's clearance so one can return to work or play with confidence.

### PROTECT YOUR BRAIN:

By its very nature, a concussion is unexpected, so it is tough to prevent. But there are several common-sense precautions that can be taken to lessen the possibility:

- Wear protective equipment. Participation in high-contact, high-risk sports such as football, hockey, boxing, soccer, skateboarding, snowboarding, horseback riding, and roller blading are threat to brain's health. Wearing headgear, padding, mouth and eye guards and helmet can help safeguard against traumatic head injuries. Ensure that the equipment is properly fitted, well maintained, and worn consistently.
- Drive and ride smart. Always wear a seatbelt, obey posted speed limits, and don't use drugs or alcohol, because they can impair reaction time.
- Don't fight. Concussions are often sustained during an assault, and more males than females report traumatic head injuries.

### GOOD NEWS:

All concussions do get better and you return to your normal daily routine.

**SOURCE(S):** American Academy of Neurology

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