
Coping with Concussion

Concussion is also known as mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI). It is often caused by a blow to the head or a fall. You may have been unconscious for a few seconds or minutes after the injury. Or maybe you were dazed, confused, or “saw stars.” After this, you thought you were OK. Now, weeks or months later, you’re having symptoms that may be caused by a concussion. The good news is that, in most people, these symptoms will likely go away on their own. Most people with a concussion recover fully, with no need for treatment.



What is a concussion?

A concussion is a mild form of brain injury. In some cases, the effects of a concussion go away within days of the injury. In others, symptoms may continue for a few months. Fortunately, a concussion is temporary. Even when symptoms stay for months, they do go away over time. If they don't, or if your symptoms are worse, contact your healthcare provider.

Symptoms of a concussion

You may have noticed some of these symptoms:

- Headaches
- Irritability and other changes in behavior
- Problems remembering or concentrating
- Appearing dazed or confused
- Dizziness or lack of coordination
- Fatigue
- Problems sleeping
- Sensitivity to light and sound
- Vision changes
- Ringing in the ears

- Nausea and vomiting

When to seek medical care

Note: If you have trouble functioning, severe symptoms, or symptoms are getting worse, it is important to talk with your healthcare provider or seek medical care right away. If you had a more serious head injury than a concussion, you will likely need more testing and treatment.

What you can do

The effects of a concussion go away over time, so there isn't a lot you need to do. Be assured that this problem is temporary. You'll likely have a full recovery. In the meantime, talk with your healthcare provider about ways to relieve any symptoms that are bothering you. These tips may help:

- Don't return to sports or any activity that could cause you to hit your head until all symptoms are gone and you have been cleared by your healthcare provider. A second head injury before fully recovering from the first one can lead to serious brain injury.
- Return to normal activities of daily living and normal social interaction as you feel able to do so. This may help speed recovery.
- Stress can make symptoms worse. Help calm yourself by resting in a quiet place and imagining a peaceful scene. Relax your muscles by soaking in a hot bath or taking a hot shower.
- Take over-the-counter acetaminophen to relieve headache pain. Take it as directed on the package. Don't take ibuprofen or aspirin after a head injury.
- If you become dizzy, sit or lie down in a safe place until the sensation passes. Don't drive when you feel dizzy or disoriented.
- If you're having trouble sleeping, try to keep a regular sleep schedule. Go to bed and get up at the same time each day. Don't have any caffeine or nicotine, or limit how much you have. Don't drink alcohol. It may help you sleep at first, but your sleep will not be restful.
- Give yourself time to heal. Your recovery will take some time. When you have symptoms, remember that you won't feel this way forever. In time, the symptoms will go away, and you'll be back to yourself.

If you're not feeling better

The effects of a concussion often go away in 7 to 10 days. Most people who have had a concussion have recovered after 3 months. If you're not feeling better as time passes, there may be something else going on. If your symptoms don't go away or you notice new ones, talk with your healthcare provider or seek medical care right away, as other types of testing or treatment may be needed.