



# BETTERSAFE

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

## Could it Be a Concussion?

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR & WHAT TO DO

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), each year, more than two million people in the U.S. visit an emergency room for a traumatic brain injury (TBI). A TBI is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that disrupts the normal function of the brain. Not all blows or jolts to the head result in a TBI. In fact, brain injuries can range from mild to severe. The most common type of mild brain injury is a concussion.

Concussions can be caused by an impact to your head or whiplash motion to your body that makes your brain bounce or twist inside your skull. That can stretch your brain cells and cause harmful chemical changes that interfere with brain activity. If that sounds scary and serious, that's because it is. Indeed, experts note that even though they're classified as "mild," concussions should be taken seriously.

Although most people heal from a concussion relatively quickly, some will experience long-term effects on their thinking, mood, balance, and more. Being able to recognize the symptoms of a concussion is important so you can seek immediate treatment and reduce the risk of long-term harm.

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

If you've suffered a blow or hit to the head, keep in mind that symptoms can vary and be hard to detect. Some people may briefly lose consciousness right after a jolt to the head. Later symptoms can include headache, nausea,



confusion, dizziness, or memory problems. Some people may also have sensitivity to light or noise, feel groggy or slow, or have changes to their sleep patterns. If you or a family member has suffered a blow to the head and are experiencing any of these symptoms, it's best to visit a healthcare professional to be evaluated.

To diagnose a concussion, your doctor will ask how the injury happened and about your symptoms. They may also evaluate your balance, vision, and eye movements. Most people with a suspected concussion don't need additional tests. Those with more serious concussions may have bleeding or other damage in the brain. In that case, further testing is needed to detect concerns such as an imaging test, like a CT scan.

#### TREATMENT & SELF-CARE

People diagnosed with a concussion require follow-up care. For those with a concussion, visual and balance problems can make it hard to do things like read, write, use an electronic device, or perform strenuous physical

activity. After a concussion, the brain needs time to rest. Research has shown that those with a concussion benefit from reducing their mental and physical activity for a short time returning to those activities gradually. Keep in mind that with a doctor's approval, returning to daily activities such as work or sports will be possible.

People who have experienced a head injury need to be patient during the healing process. If set backs occur or symptoms persist, there are many excellent physical rehabilitation programs supporting treatment towards recovery. Talk with your doctor about how to return to activity after a concussion. If symptoms persist, ask about physical therapy.

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#### SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF...

If you or a family member has experienced a hit or blow to the head and experience any of the below symptoms you should seek immediate emergency medical care:

- » Headache that gets worse and does not go away
- » Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- » Repeated vomiting or nausea
- » Slurred speech
- » Feel very drowsy or cannot wake up
- » Have one pupil (the black part in the middle of the eye) larger than the other
- » Have convulsions or seizures
- » Cannot recognize people or places
- » Are getting more and more confused, restless, or agitated
- » Have unusual behavior
- » Lose consciousness

