

How You May Feel After a Concussion & Tips for Your Recovery



A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI) caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head. Concussions can also occur from a fall or a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. Doctors may describe a concussion as a “mild” brain injury because concussions are usually not life-threatening. Even so, their effects can be serious.

Concussion signs and symptoms are part of the normal healing process.

Some concussion symptoms may appear right away, while other symptoms may not appear for hours or days after the injury. Symptoms generally improve over time, and most people with a concussion feel better within a couple of weeks.

Here are symptoms you may have:



Thinking/ Remembering

- Difficulty thinking clearly
- Feeling slowed down
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty remembering new information



Physical

- Headache
- Fuzzy or blurry vision
- Nausea or vomiting (early on)
- Dizziness
- Sensitivity to noise or light
- Balance problems
- Feeling tired, having no energy



Emotional

- Irritability
- Sadness
- More emotional
- Nervousness or anxiety



Sleep

- Sleeps *less* than usual
- Sleeps *more* than usual
- Trouble falling asleep



More information on concussion, as well as tips to help you feel better, can be found at www.cdc.gov/TraumaticBrainInjury.

Start your recovery by taking it easy. As symptoms improve, you may gradually return to regular activities.

Recovery from a concussion means you can do your regular activities without experiencing concussion symptoms. Recovery from a concussion may be slower among older adults, young children, and teens. People who have had a concussion in the past may also find that it takes longer to recover.

The First Few Days

- Take it easy the first few days after a concussion when symptoms are more severe.
- You may need to take a short time off from work or school, although usually no more than 2 to 3 days.
- Ask your doctor for written instructions about when you can safely return to work, school, or other activities, such as driving a car.



As You Start to Feel Better

- As you start to feel better after the first few days of your injury, you can gradually return to regular (non-strenuous) activities, such as taking a short walk.
- Avoid activities that make your symptoms come back or get worse.



When Symptoms Are Nearly Gone

- When your symptoms are mild and nearly gone, you can return to most of your regular activities.
- If your symptoms do not get worse during an activity, then that activity is OK for you. If your symptoms get worse, you should cut back on that activity.

Taking these steps may help speed your recovery:

- Avoid activities that can put you at risk for another injury to your head and brain.
- Stay connected to friends and loved ones and talk with them about how you are feeling.
- Ask your doctor about medications that are safe to take during recovery to help with symptoms (for example, ibuprofen or acetaminophen for headaches).
- Limit screen time and loud music before bed, sleep in a dark room, and keep to a fixed bedtime and wake-up schedule.

If you do not think you are getting better or your symptoms are getting worse, tell your doctor. Your doctor may refer you to a specialist.

The information provided in this handout is not a substitute for medical or professional care. Questions about diagnosis and treatment for a concussion should be directed to your healthcare provider.