

# Concussion

Concussion, or mild traumatic brain injury, is a type of head injury that can result from a forceful impact to the head, neck, or body, which causes the brain to move within the skull.

When a concussion occurs, nerve cells and blood vessels in the brain can be damaged, changing normal brain function. Concussion can affect the vision and balance systems, and make a person feel physically unwell, and/or affect their thinking, mood, and sleeping patterns.

**Concussions can occur under a range of circumstances, including:**

- Falls
- Sports (contact and non-contact) and other recreational activities
- Motor vehicle accidents
- Workplace accidents
- Assault
- Family, Domestic and Interpersonal violence

**A person does not have to lose consciousness to have a concussion.  
In fact, more than 90% of concussions do not involve a loss of consciousness.**

## Signs, Symptoms and Red Flags

Concussion can result in many different signs (things you can see, such as someone falling and holding their head) and symptoms (things people say they are experiencing). It is possible for a person to experience different concussion signs and symptoms after their injury, even if they have had a concussion before. Just one concussion sign or symptom is enough to indicate that a concussion may have occurred.

Concussion symptoms may appear at the time of injury or develop and/or worsen over the following hours or days.

**Red flags** are signs and symptoms that may indicate more severe injury to the brain. **If someone who you witness or suspect has had a concussion shows any red flags, seek medical attention immediately.**

Concussion is undetectable on CT or MRIs, unless there is a brain bleed, so it's important to relay all signs and symptoms to your GP or health professional to receive an accurate diagnosis.

Symptoms - immediate	Delayed Symptoms - up to 72 hours post-injury	RED FLAGS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Headache or pressure in the head</li><li>• Dizziness</li><li>• Changes in vision</li><li>• Confusion</li><li>• Memory loss (amnesia)</li><li>• Increased irritability, frustration</li><li>• Feeling tired or drowsy</li><li>• Not feeling right</li><li>• Nausea and/or vomiting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Persistent headaches</li><li>• Difficulties remembering or concentrating</li><li>• Sensitivity to light or noise</li><li>• Feelings of sadness</li><li>• Anxiety</li><li>• Mood swings</li><li>• Changes in sleep patterns</li><li>• Fatigue or tiring easily</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Severe or increasing headache</li><li>• Loss of consciousness</li><li>• Seizure or convulsion</li><li>• Repeated vomiting</li><li>• Changes in vision</li><li>• Neck pain or tenderness</li><li>• Weakness or unable to move the body as usual</li><li>• Numbness, tingling, or burning in arms or legs</li><li>• Increased confusion, agitation, or restlessness</li><li>• Continual bleeding or clear liquid coming from ear or nose</li></ul>

## Concussion Management and Recovery

The first 24 - 48 hours following a concussion should be a period of relative (not strict) rest. Following on from this time period your recovery may still take a number of weeks.

### Current concussion management advice suggests:

- You should be observed by a responsible adult for the first 24 - 48 hours. Seek immediate medical attention if you develop any red flags.
- You may return to light physical activity during this time (e.g. walking or gentle stationary bike riding) if it does not make your symptoms more than mildly or briefly worse
- Do not drive or operate heavy machinery for at least 24 hours. You should not drive until all your symptoms have resolved, or you have been cleared by a medical professional to return to driving and/or operating machinery. If you are on medication that makes you drowsy, do not drive until you have completed the course of medicine.
- You may partake in light cognitive activity, but limit screen time such as tv, tablets, phones, laptops and gaming in the first 48 hours following your injury.
- Regular routines should be followed as much as possible. Particularly for young children in regard to meal, bath and bed time.
- Use Paracetamol or Ibuprofen for pain and inflammation. Ice packs may be used on swollen or painful areas in the initial recovery period.
- Do not drink alcohol, take sleeping pills, recreational drugs, or smoke cigarettes/vape. These can make your symptoms worse. They can also make it difficult for other people to tell whether your injury is affecting you or not.
- If possible, avoid air travel during your recovery.

A graded return to activities such as school, work, and sports is recommended to help the recovery process. There is 'return to' guidance on the Connectivity website.

Most people will fully recover from concussion within approximately four weeks

However, some people will experience concussion symptoms for longer than expected - this is known as persistent post-concussion symptoms. If your symptoms are persisting, it is important to discuss this with your doctor, who may refer you to one of a range of specialists if symptoms do not improve.

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## More information

Connectivity Traumatic Brain Injury Australia is an Australia-wide not-for-profit organisation working to raise awareness of concussion and traumatic brain injury in the community. For more information on concussion, you can speak to your doctor, healthcare professional, or visit the Connectivity website at [www.connectivity.org.au](http://www.connectivity.org.au)



DISCLAIMER: This flyer and the Connectivity website does not offer medical advice for individuals. If you have suffered a concussion, please seek medical advice.