

Symptoms

The signs and symptoms of a concussion can be subtle and may not show up immediately. Symptoms can last for days, weeks or even longer.

Common symptoms after a concussive traumatic brain injury are headache, loss of memory (amnesia) and confusion. The amnesia usually involves forgetting the event that caused the concussion.

Physical signs and symptoms of a concussion may include:

- Headache
- Ringing in the ears
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Fatigue or drowsiness
- Blurry vision

Other signs and symptoms of a concussion include:

- Confusion or feeling as if in a fog
- Amnesia surrounding the traumatic event
- Dizziness or "seeing stars"

A witness may observe these signs and symptoms in the concussed person:

- Temporary loss of consciousness (though this doesn't always occur)
- Slurred speech
- Delayed response to questions
- Dazed appearance
- Forgetfulness, such as repeatedly asking the same question

You may have some symptoms of concussions immediately, and some can occur for days after the injury, such as:

- Concentration and memory complaints
- Irritability and other personality changes
- Sensitivity to light and noise
- Sleep disturbances
- Psychological adjustment problems and depression
- Disorders of taste and smell

Symptoms in children

Head trauma is very common in young children. But concussions can be difficult to recognize in infants and toddlers because they can't describe how they feel. Concussion clues may include:

- Dazed appearance
- Listlessness and tiring easily
- Irritability and crankiness
- Loss of balance and unsteady walking
- Excessive crying
- Change in eating or sleeping patterns
- Lack of interest in favorite toys
- Vomiting
- Seizures

When to see a doctor

See a doctor within 1 to 2 days if:

- You or your child experiences a head injury, even if emergency care isn't required

If your child doesn't have signs of a serious head injury, remains alert, moves normally and responds to you, the injury is probably mild and usually doesn't need further testing.

In this case, if your child wants to nap, it's OK to let him or her sleep. If worrisome signs develop later, seek emergency care.

Seek emergency care for an adult or child who experiences a head injury and signs and symptoms such as:

- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- A loss of consciousness lasting longer than 30 seconds
- A headache that gets worse over time
- Fluid or blood draining from the nose or ears
- Vision or eye disturbances, such as pupils that are bigger than normal (dilated pupils) or pupils of unequal sizes
- Ringing in the ears that doesn't go away
- Weakness in the arms or legs
- Appearing very pale for longer than an hour
- Changes in behavior
- Confusion or disorientation, such as difficulty recognizing people or places
- Slurred speech or other changes in speech
- Obvious difficulty with mental function or physical coordination
- Changes in physical coordination, such as stumbling or clumsiness
- Seizures or convulsions
- Lasting or recurrent dizziness
- Symptoms that worsen over time
- Large head bumps or bruises on areas other than the forehead in children, especially in infants under 12 months of age

Athletes

Never return to play or vigorous activity while signs or symptoms of a concussion are present.

Experts recommend that an athlete with a suspected concussion not return to activities that are associated with a higher risk of another concussion while still showing concussion symptoms.

Children and adolescents should be evaluated by a health care professional trained in evaluating and managing pediatric concussions.

Experts also recommend that adult, child and adolescent athletes with concussions not return to play on the same day as the injury.