



Introduction

Concussion is the sudden but short-lived loss of mental function that occurs after a blow or other injury to the head. It is the most common but least serious type of brain injury.

Symptoms

Include brief:

- loss of consciousness after the head injury
- periods of memory loss
- disturbances in vision, such as "seeing stars" or blurry vision
- a period of confusion, a blank expression, or a delay in answering questions immediately after the head injury

When to seek medical help

Concussion should only be diagnosed by a health professional trained in assessing patients with head injury. They will be able to rule out serious brain injury that needs a brain scan or further investigation.

You should visit your nearest emergency department (ED) if you or someone in your care has a head injury and develops the following signs and symptoms:

- loss of consciousness, however brief
- memory loss, such as not being able to remember what happened before or after the injury
- persistent headaches since the injury
- changes in behaviour, such as irritability, being easily distracted or having no interest in the outside world – this is a particularly common sign in children under five
- confusion
- drowsiness that occurs when you would normally be awake
- loss of balance or problems walking
- difficulties with understanding what people say
- difficulty speaking, such as slurred speech
- problems with reading or writing
- vomiting since the injury
- problems with vision, such as double vision
- loss of power in part of the body, such as weakness in an arm or leg
- clear fluid leaving the nose or ears (this could be cerebrospinal fluid, which surrounds the brain)
- sudden deafness in one or both ears
- any wound to the head or face

Phone 999 for an ambulance immediately if the person:

- remains unconscious after the initial injury
- is having a seizure or fit
- is bleeding from one or both ears
- has been vomiting since the injury
- is having difficulty staying awake, speaking, or understanding what people are saying

There are things you can do at home to help relieve concussion symptoms, including:

- apply a cold compress to the injury to reduce swelling – a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a towel will do
- take paracetamol to control any pain – do not use non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen or aspirin, as these can cause bleeding

If concussion has been suspected or confirmed, always seek medical advice prior to returning to playing sport.

Recovery

After experiencing concussion, careful monitoring is needed. This is usually for 48 hours. This is because the symptoms of concussion could also be symptoms of a more serious condition, such as:

- [subdural heamatoma](#)– bleeding between the skull and the brain
- [subarachnoid heamorrhage](#)– bleeding on the surface of the brain

Outlook

The actual extent of damage to the brain is usually minimal and does not cause long-term problems or complications.

Remember if in doubt or if you are concerned seek further medical advice from your GP or dial 111.