

Education for Patients and Families after Concussion and Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

Concussions and minor head injuries cause injury to the brain. A change in consciousness or loss of consciousness may occur up to 20 minutes after the time of the injury. The actual injury may not always be seen on MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) or CT (Computed Tomography) scan.

You may or may not remember the actual event that caused the injury and may forget events that occurred a brief period of time before or after the injury. This is called "traumatic amnesia."

A contusion is a bruise to the brain, which can be seen on a head CT. Temporary swelling of the brain may occur, and therefore, it may take longer to recover from this injury than from a concussion.

Most people with minor head injuries tend to recover quickly and have no problems. Sometimes, in a more demanding environment, such as work or school, some people may experience difficulties not seen in the early phase of recovery. It is important to remember these changes are caused by an injury to the brain, which makes it difficult for the person to understand his or her environment. Most of these problems will improve or resolve without any specific treatment. These changes can be difficult for family and friends to understand.

The following are common symptoms of a head injury, which can last anywhere from 3 to 12 months after the injury. If you or your child experience any of these, it may be a concussion.

- Headache
- Blurry or double vision
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Ringing in the ears
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Temper outbursts
- Impulsive behavior
- Lack of energy
- Sudden confusion
- Loss of concentration
- Change in judgment
- Memory problems
- Loss of taste or smell
- Difficulty sleeping
- Weakness
- Loss of balance
- Coordination problems
- Sensitivity to light and noise

The following are more serious consequences of a head injury. If you or your child experience any of the following, call 911 or visit your closest Emergency Room.

- Loss of consciousness
- Extreme difficulty waking up
- Confusion
- Persistent vomiting
- Severe headache
- Sudden change in speech or walking pattern

Recovery Tips

- Get plenty of rest.
- Avoid alcohol. Alcohol affects brain function and should not be consumed after a head injury.
- Ask your physician to provide you with guidelines for resuming your normal activities – for example, when you can return to sports, return to school or work, and drive.
- Wear a helmet. It is strongly recommended that a helmet be worn for cycling, skiing, snowboarding, skateboarding, riding a scooter/ATV, motorcycle, or for any similar activities. And you must always wear a seat belt when riding in a car.
- Make sure you understand and follow your doctor's instructions about how to take any prescription medications.
- Write important information down on paper to help with memory problems.

Comprehensive, expert care for concussions is available at NYU Langone Medical Center's multidisciplinary Concussion Center.

Call the Concussion Center at [855-NYU-2220](tel:855-NYU-2220) or visit us on the web at www.NYULMC.org/concussion.



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