

Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI)/Concussion

A concussion (sometimes called a mild traumatic brain injury [mTBI]) occurs when there has been an injury, jolt, or blow to the head or body that causes your head and brain to move back and forth quickly. This can happen if you play sports, fall, or are in a car accident. This type of injury is sometimes called an “invisible injury” because it is too small to be seen on a CT scan or MRI.

Symptoms

Symptoms vary from person to person; but, may affect many parts of your health. Symptoms may show up right away, be delayed many days or not appear until you get back to your normal routine.

Thinking/Memory

- Hard to think clearly
- Feeling slowed down
- Hard to concentrate
- Hard to remember new information

Physical

- Headache
- Blurry vision
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizzy/light headed
- Sensitive to noise or light
- Balance problems
- Feeling tired/ no energy

Emotional/Mood

- Irritable
- Sadness
- Nervous/anxiety
- More emotional

Sleep

- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Trouble falling asleep

Most people fully recover from a concussion without medical treatment. If you still have symptoms in 2 weeks, you should see your primary care doctor. If you have a history of learning disabilities, ADHD, depression, anxiety or repeat concussions it may take longer to improve.

Treatment

Rest your body and brain for the first 48 hours. During this time **do not**:

- Play sports
- Do heavy housework
- Read
- Have screen time on your phone/computer

After 48 hours, you can slowly start to go back to your normal routine.

When to Call

If you follow what we suggest above, symptoms should improve after the first few days. Call your doctor if your symptoms get worse or you have problems with your normal routine. Based on your symptoms, the doctor may want you to see other health care experts. A speech, physical (PT), or occupational (OT) therapist may be able to help you get better.

Returning to Work/School

If you **do not** have symptoms, you may return to work/school 24-48 hours after the injury. If you have symptoms, ask your doctor when you can go back. This is different for everyone. If you are getting speech, PT or OT, your therapist may offer ideas about going back to work/school. At first, you may go back for only part of the day. Then, you can slowly increase your hours.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC]. (2019). Symptoms of traumatic brain injury (TBI). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/symptoms.html>

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 4/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7264