

Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI)/Concussion

What is 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.

What should I expect after a concussion?

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

How long will the symptoms last?

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.

How do we treat mTBI?

You should 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.

Thinking/ Remembering	Physical	Emotional/ Mood	Sleep
Difficulty thinking clearly	Headache Fuzzy or blurry vision	Irritability	Sleeping more than usual
Feeling slowed down	Nausea or vomiting (early on) Dizziness	Sadness	Sleep less than usual
Difficulty concentrating	Sensitivity to noise or light Balance problems	More emotional	Trouble falling asleep
Difficulty remembering new information	Feeling tired, having no energy	Nervousness or anxiety	

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.

Return to Work/School

If you do not have symptoms, you may go back 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 © 5/2019 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7264