

# Heads Up: Preventing Concussion

A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head. They can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works.

Most people will only experience symptoms from a concussion for a short period of time. But sometimes concussion can lead to long-lasting problems. The best way to protect yourself and your family from concussions is to prevent them from happening.

## How to Prevent a Concussion

There are many ways to reduce the chances that you or your family members will have a concussion or more serious brain injury:

- Wear a seat belt every time you drive or ride in a motor vehicle.
- Buckle your child in the car using a child safety seat, booster seat, or seat belt (according to the child's height, weight, and age).
  - Children should start using a booster seat when they outgrow their child safety seats (usually when they weigh about 40 pounds). They should continue to ride in a booster seat until the lap/shoulder belts in the car fit properly, typically when they are approximately 4'9" tall.
- Never drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Wear a helmet and make sure your children wear helmets that are fitted and maintained properly when:
  - Riding a bike, motorcycle, snowmobile, scooter, or all-terrain vehicle;
  - Playing a contact sport, such as football, ice hockey, lacrosse, or boxing;
  - Using in-line skates or riding a skateboard;
  - Batting and running bases in baseball or softball;
  - Riding a horse; or
  - Skiing, sledding, or snowboarding.
- Ensure that during athletic games and practices, you and/or your children:
  - Use the right protective equipment (should be fitted and maintained properly in order to provide the expected protection);
  - Follow the safety rules and the rules of the sport;
  - Practice good sportsmanship; and
  - Do not return to play with a known or suspected concussion until you have been evaluated and given permission by an appropriate health care professional.
- Make living areas safer for seniors by:
  - Removing tripping hazards such as throw rugs and clutter in walkways;
  - Using nonslip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors;
  - Installing grab bars next to the toilet and in the tub or shower;
  - Installing handrails on both sides of stairways;
  - Improving lighting throughout the home; and
  - Maintaining a regular exercise program to improve lower body strength and balance, if your health care professional agrees.
- Make living areas safer for children by:
  - Installing window guards to keep young children from falling out of open windows;
  - Using safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs when young children are around;
  - Keeping stairs clear of clutter;
  - Securing rugs and using rubber mats in bathtubs; and
  - Not allowing children to play on fire escapes or on other unsafe platforms.
- Make sure the surface on your child's playground is made of shock-absorbing material, such as hardwood mulch or sand, and is maintained to an appropriate depth.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

# When to Call the Doctor: Signs and Symptoms of Concussion

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Here is a list of common signs and symptoms of a concussion.

If you or a family member has an injury to the head and you notice any of the symptoms on the list, call your doctor right away. Describe the injury and symptoms and ask if you should make an appointment to see your doctor or another specialist.

## Signs and Symptoms of Concussion

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty thinking clearly</li> <li>• Feeling slowed down</li> <li>• Difficulty concentrating</li> <li>• Difficulty remembering</li> <li>• Difficulty following conversation or directions</li> <li>• Answers questions more slowly or repeatedly</li> <li>• Dazed or stunned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headache</li> <li>• Nausea or vomiting</li> <li>• Clumsiness or balance problems</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Fuzzy or blurry vision</li> <li>• Feeling tired all of the time, having no energy</li> <li>• Sensitivity to light</li> <li>• Sensitivity to noise</li> <li>• Numbness/tingling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Sadness</li> <li>• More emotional</li> <li>• Nervousness or anxiety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sleeping more than usual</li> <li>• Sleeping less than usual</li> <li>• Trouble falling asleep</li> <li>• Drowsiness</li> </ul>
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*When you visit your doctor, here are some important questions to ask:*

- What can I do to help my recovery from this injury?
- When is it safe to get back to my daily routine, such as school, work, or playing sports and doing other physical activities?
- What can I do to keep from injuring myself again?

*For more information, contact...*

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control works to reduce disability, deaths, and costs associated with injuries. CDC has a wide variety of resources and materials about concussion and other types of injuries. Call CDC toll-free at 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) or visit CDC's Injury Center on the Web at [www.cdc.gov/injury](http://www.cdc.gov/injury).

### Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center

The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) identifies active duty military and veterans with brain injury and provides resources to ensure they receive the best evaluation, treatment, and follow-up. Call DVBIC toll-free at 1-800-870-9244 or visit DVBIC on the Web at [www.dvbic.org](http://www.dvbic.org).

### Brain Injury Association of America

The Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA) focuses on prevention, research, education, and advocacy. BIAA has a national network of more than 40 state affiliates across the country and hundreds of local chapters and support groups. Call BIAA toll-free at 1-800-444-6443 or visit BIAA on the Web at [www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org).

