

# When Your Head Has Been Hurt: Signs and Symptoms



A head injury can happen to anyone at any age at any time.

Many people who hurt their heads get well and have no long-term problems.

Concussions are caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

You can’t see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury.

If you notice any symptoms of concussion seek medical attention right away.

(Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control HEADS UP <https://www.cdc.gov/heads-up>)

## Problems at the Time of Injury

### Headaches

- headache that keeps coming back
- pain in head/ neck
- pain below the ear
- pain in the jaw
- pain in or around the eyes

### Balance Problems

- dizziness
- trouble with balance

### Sensory Changes

- changes in taste or smell
- appetite changes
- too hot/ cold
- ringing in the ears
- bothered by noises
- can’t handle background noise
- vision changes
- bothered by light



If you have any of these problems, see a doctor right away.

- nausea or vomiting
- one pupil larger than the other
- headache that does not go away
- seizures, eyes fluttering, body going stiff, staring into space
- loss of consciousness, even brief
- disoriented/ confused
- hands shake, tremors, muscles get weak, loss of muscle tone



### DANGER SIGNS

[cdc.gov/heads-up/signs-symptoms](https://www.cdc.gov/heads-up/signs-symptoms)

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI). All concussions should be taken seriously.

### WHAT TO DO:

Seek help & referrals.

Treatment for concussion is available.

Your doctor may refer you to:

- Neurologist
- Neuropsychologist
- Specialized concussion center
- Brain injury rehabilitation center
- Specialist in your particular symptom

### Sleep Problems

- can't sleep through the night
- sleep too much
- days and nights get mixed up

### Pain Problems

- neck and shoulder pain that happens a lot
- other unexplained body pain





# PROBLEMS TO WATCH FOR OVER TIME



## Changes in Mood Personality or Behavior

- irritability, anxiety, restlessness
- upset or frustrated easily
- overreacts, cries or laughs too easily
- mood swings
- want to be alone or away from people
- sad, depressed
- tired, drowsy
- trips, falls, drops things, is awkward
- does not want to do anything, can't "get started"



## Trouble Communicating

- trouble thinking of the right word
- trouble listening
- trouble paying attention, can't have long conversations
- does not say things clearly
- trouble reading
- talk too much/ too little

## Thinking Problems

- trouble remembering things
- trouble paying attention
- more time needed to process information
- take things too literally, doesn't get jokes
- think about the same thing over and over
- trouble learning new things
- trouble putting things in order (desk, room, papers)
- trouble remembering to do things on time
- trouble planning, starting, doing, and finishing a task
- trouble making decisions
- make poor choices

## Other Things To Think About!

- ✓ Tell work of the injury
- ✓ Return to activities/ work gradually
- ✓ Be cleared by a doctor before returning to strenuous physical activity



## Concussion In Older Adults

- Older adults are more likely to get a concussion from a bump, blow or jolt to the head.
- Even falling to your knees or bumping your head on a doorway can cause a concussion.
- Signs and symptoms may be delayed in someone who is older.
- Diagnosing a concussion can be harder in someone who already has changes in their thinking or behavior because of aging.



TN Disability Coalition/ Brain Links  
615-383-9442

<https://www.tndisability.org/brain>



@BrainLinksTN

TN Traumatic Brain Injury Program  
800-882-0611

<https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/fhw/tbi.html>



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