



# How to Treat a Mild Concussion

Three Methods: [Treating a Mild Concussion Immediately](#) [Treating a Mild Concussion at Home](#) [Monitoring Serious Symptoms](#)

A concussion is a type of mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI). It can be caused by a bump, a hit, a fall, or any type of head injury that pushes the head and brain back and forth rapidly. In a concussion, the brain is shaken back and forth within the skull.<sup>[1]</sup> Most concussions are mild in the sense that a person most likely will recover completely, but the symptoms can be very difficult to notice, can develop slowly, and can last for days or weeks. If you have been hit in the head, you should see a physician within one to two days at the most to be evaluated, even if you don't think it is serious. After seeing a doctor, there are ways you can treat a mild concussion at home.

Method  
1

## Treating a Mild Concussion Immediately

**1 Call emergency services.** If someone has a head injury, you should call 911 and have him checked out by medical professionals. Even minor concussions should be checked out by a doctor.<sup>[2]</sup> If you choose not to call emergency services after a minor head wound, you still need to watch for severe symptoms. If you notice any of these symptoms, call 911 immediately:

- Vomiting
- Having pupils of unequal size
- Being dizzy, confused, or agitated
- Being unconscious
- Seeming drowsy
- Having neck pain
- Having slurred or difficult speech
- Having trouble walking
- Having seizures

**2 Check the person over.** After a head injury, check the person. Look for loss of consciousness first. Then, check his **mental awareness**. Don't move him unless it's absolutely necessary.

- To check for mental awareness, ask the person his name, what day it is, how many fingers you're holding up, and if he remembers what just happened.
- If he is unconscious, check his **airways, breathing, and circulation** to make sure he's breathing, and immediately call emergency services.

**3 Make the person rest.** After someone suffers a blow to the head, he needs to rest. If the head wound isn't major, the person can sit up. Make sure he is in a comfortable position. Cover him with a blanket if one is available.<sup>[3]</sup>

- If the head wound is severe, or you believe the person has neck or back damage, don't move him unless necessary.<sup>[4]</sup>

**4 Apply ice.** If the injury is not bleeding, apply ice to any swollen areas. Make sure not to put ice directly on the skin. Instead, place a cloth between the ice and the swollen area.<sup>[5]</sup>

- You can use a bag of frozen vegetables if you don't have an ice pack or ice available.

**5 Apply pressure.** If the wound is bleeding, apply pressure to it to stop the bleeding. Use a towel, article of clothing, or other piece of cloth to staunch the bleeding. If at all possible, make sure the cloth is clean, but if you don't have access clean cloth, use the cleanest piece of cloth you can find. Don't press too hard; you want to stop the bleeding, but not cause any additional pain. Gently press the cloth to the wound.<sup>[6]</sup>

- If at all possible, keep your hands away from the wound. Only touch the wound with the towel to avoid transferring bacteria into the wound.
- If you believe there is a serious injury, don't move the person's head or remove the debris from the head. Wait for emergency services to arrive.

**6 Be prepared to administer first aid if necessary.** If the person loses consciousness while you wait for help, you will need to **monitor his breathing and pulse**. Watch for obvious signs of breathing (such as the rise and fall of his chest) or see if you can feel his breath on your skin by placing your hand near his nose and mouth. Check his pulse by placing your index and middle fingers against the groove in the neck, just beneath the jaw and to the right or left of the voice box or Adam's apple.

- If the person throws up, carefully **turn him on his side**, making sure his head and neck do not twist. Clear his mouth of debris so he does not choke on his vomit.
- If at any time the person stops breathing or has no pulse, begin **CPR**. Continue until emergency personnel arrive.

### Method 2

## Treating a Mild Concussion at Home

**1 Rest.** Treating a mild concussion requires both physical and mental rest. That is the single most important thing a person can do to recover as quickly as possible.<sup>[7]</sup>

- Physical rest means refraining from physical activity and exertion. A person should not get involved in any sports or any vigorous activity until his symptoms are gone or his physician clears him.
- Mental rest means not engaging in thinking, reading, using the computer, watching TV, texting, schoolwork, or any activities that require concentration. Do not drive or operate machinery or tools.

**2 Get plenty of sleep.** In addition to resting while awake, a person with a concussion needs to get plenty of sleep at night. This is just as important as resting.<sup>[8]</sup> Try to get at least seven to nine hours each night.

**3 Avoid mind-altering substances.** When someone has a concussion, he should avoid mind-altering substances. Do not drink alcohol, and do not take any recreational drugs.<sup>[9]</sup>

**4 Take pain reliever.** If a person has headaches, he can take acetaminophen (Tylenol) for pain.<sup>[10]</sup>

- Avoid ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB), aspirin, and Naproxen (Aleve). These pain relievers can increase internal bleeding.<sup>[11]</sup>

**5 Use an ice pack.** If someone has a bump or a bruise that hurts, use an ice pack. Don't place the ice pack directly on the person's skin. Wrap it in a towel, and hold it on the bump or bruise for 10 to 30 minutes. Repeat every two to four hours for the first 48 hours.<sup>[12]</sup>

- If an ice pack is not available, a bag of frozen vegetables can be used.
- Ice packs can help with the inner headache as well.

**6 Stay with someone for 48 hours.** When someone has a concussion, he should not be alone for 48 hours after the injury. Someone needs to stay with him in case he starts exhibiting serious symptoms.<sup>[13]</sup>

### Method 3

## Monitoring Serious Symptoms

**1 Recognize the symptoms of a concussion.** After someone hits his head, he or someone close to him needs to monitor for symptoms. He needs to know if he has a concussion. The most common symptoms of a concussion include:<sup>[14][15]</sup>

- Headache or a sense of pressure in head

- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness or loss of balance
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- A sense of feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Confusion, or concentration or memory problems like amnesia of the event
- General sense of not feeling right
- Seeming dazed, stunned, confused, forgetful, and moving clumsily
- Loss of consciousness
- Slow to answer questions
- Mood, personality, or behavior changes

**2 Monitor for delayed symptoms.** Some concussions symptoms can be delayed. Symptoms can occur minutes, hours, or even days after the injury. A person should continue to watch for symptoms for a few days after the concussion.<sup>[16]</sup> These include:

- Concentration or memory problems
- Irritability and other personality changes
- Sensitivity to light and noise
- Sleep disturbances, such as not being able to go to sleep, difficulty staying asleep, or not being able to wake up
- Psychological adjustment problems and depression
- Disorders of taste and smell

**3 Watch for symptoms in children.** In young children, it can be difficult to detect a concussion. In children, symptoms of a concussion include:<sup>[17]</sup>

- A dazed or confused appearance
- Listlessness
- Easily tired
- Irritability
- Loss of balance and unsteady walking
- Excessive crying with nothing working to soothe the child
- Any change in eating or sleeping patterns
- A sudden lack of interest in favorite toys

**4 Monitor for red flags.** Some symptoms that occur after a concussion are red flags. Red flags are signs that someone should get immediate medical attention. These red flags include:<sup>[18]</sup>

- Repeated vomiting
- Any loss of consciousness that lasts longer than 30 seconds
- A worsening headache
- Sudden changes in behavior, the ability to walk, like sudden stumbling, falling or dropping objects, or thinking ability
- Confusion or disorientation, like not recognizing people or surroundings
- Slurred speech or other changes in speech
- Seizures or uncontrolled tremors
- Vision or eye disturbances, like pupils of unequal sizes or very large, dilated pupils
- Dizziness that doesn't get any better
- Any symptoms that get worse
- Large bumps or bruises on the head (other than the forehead) in children, especially in infants under 12 months of age

## Sources and Citations

1. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/concussion/basics/definition/CON-20019272>
2. <http://www.webmd.com/first-aid/concussion-treatment>

3. <https://www.sja.org.uk/sja/first-aid-advice/head/head-injuries.aspx>

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