



What to expect after a concussion

A part of CDC's "Heads Up" Series



For more information about concussion, please visit:
www.cdc.gov/Concussion.

PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS

You have been examined at _____
[name of hospital emergency department]
for a head injury and possible concussion. Be sure to let a family member or friend know about your injury. They may notice symptoms before you do and can help you.

Take time off from work or school for _____ days or until you and your doctor think you are able to return to your usual routine.

Your next appointment with _____
[Doctor's name]
is _____
[date and time]

What to Expect Once You're Home from the Hospital

Most people with a concussion recover quickly and fully. During recovery, you may have a range of symptoms that appear right away, while others may not be noticed for hours or even days after the injury. You may not realize you have problems until you try to do your usual activities again. Most symptoms go away over time without any treatment. Below is a list of some of the symptoms you may have:



Thinking/Remembering

- Difficulty thinking clearly
- Feeling slowed down
- Trouble concentrating
- Difficulty remembering new information



Physical

- Headache
- Balance problems
- Blurred vision
- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Lack of energy
- Sensitivity to noise or light



Emotional/Mood

- Irritability
- Nervousness
- Sadness
- More emotional



Sleep

- Sleeping more than usual
- Sleeping less than usual
- Trouble falling asleep

How to Feel Better

- Get plenty of rest and sleep.
- Avoid activities that are physically demanding or require a lot of thinking.
- Do not drink alcohol.
- Return slowly and gradually to your routine.
- Ask a doctor when it is safe to drive, ride a bike, or operate heavy equipment.

WHEN TO RETURN TO THE HOSPITAL

Sometimes serious problems develop after a head injury. Return to the emergency department right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- Repeated vomiting
- Worsening or severe headache
- Unable to stay awake during times you would normally be awake
- More confused and restless
- Seizures
- Difficulty walking or difficulty with balance
- Difficulty with your vision
- Any symptom that concerns you, your family members, or friends