

New Theories About Brain Concussions



Every year, many people sustain a concussion—an injury to the brain that results from a mild or severe blow to the head. In most cases, injuries sustained from a concussion will resolve sometime between a few minutes or a few weeks, with no permanent damage. However, researchers are now discovering that repeated concussions to the head, without adequate rest or recovery, can lead to long-term complications.

Concussions can result from falls; car, bicycle or roller skating accidents; or being struck in the head. After a concussion, some people lose consciousness while others appear dazed and confused or show no symptoms at all.

Symptoms of a concussion can be both complex and subtle, with some symptoms appearing immediately while others, days or even weeks later. Friends and family members should watch for the following in anyone who has suffered a blow to the head:

- **Headaches that get worse or won't go away;**
- **Feeling dazed or lightheaded;**
- **Blurred vision;**
- **Excessive drowsiness or difficulty waking the person;**
- **Speech, language or memory problems;**
- **Person becomes easily confused, agitated or has trouble concentrating;**
- **Vomiting; and**
- **Seizures.**

A person with a suspected concussion should be taken to an emergency room or see a doctor immediately. Although most people recover without complications, older adults should be watched carefully as they have a higher risk for complications, including blood clots that can lead to strokes.

Recovery will depend on the severity of the injury, your general health, your age and what part of the brain was injured. Rest and follow your doctor's instructions. Even after you have healed, protect yourself from additional concussions that, like those experienced by boxers or football players, can create problems later in life.