

After a concussion, which teens will have emotional symptoms?

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After a concussion, teens who are sensitive to light or noise may be more likely to also have emotional symptoms such as anxiety, according to a study released today that will be presented at The Sports Concussion Conference in Chicago, July 11 to 13, 2014, hosted by the American Academy of Neurology, the world's leading authority on diagnosing and managing sports concussion. The conference will feature the latest scientific advances in diagnosing and treating sports concussion from leading experts in the field.

The symptoms after a [concussion](#) can vary widely from person to person. Symptoms can include physical, emotional and cognitive difficulties.

"While most people recover from a concussion within a week, a number of factors affect people's recovery, and studies have shown that teenage athletes may take up to seven to 10 days longer to recover than older athletes," said study author Lisa M. Koehl, MS, and Dong (Dan) Y. Han, PsyD, of the University of Kentucky in Lexington.

The study involved 37 athletes age 12 to 17 who had persisting symptoms for an average of 37 days following a concussion. Participants were excluded if they had a previous history of psychological issues. One group of 22 [teens](#) had emotional symptoms such as irritability, aggression, anxiety, depression, apathy, frequent mood changes or excessive emotional reactions after the concussion. The second group of 15 teens did not have emotional symptoms. There were no differences between the two groups in factors such as what percentage experienced

loss of consciousness or amnesia, indicating that the groups were likely comparable in the level of severity of concussion.

The study found that of the 22 teens who had emotional symptoms, five teens (23 percent) were sensitive to light while three teens (14 percent) were sensitive to noise. In comparison, of the 15 teens without emotional symptoms only two teens (13 percent) were sensitive to light and no teens were sensitive to noise.

The number of concussions experienced and whether teens also had headaches or nausea were not related to whether they also had emotional symptoms. Researchers also found that having a family history of psychiatric problems did not make teens any more or less likely to have emotional symptoms after a concussion.

Teens who had anxiety were 55 percent more likely to self-report attention difficulties than those without anxiety, while teens with irritability/aggression were 35 percent more likely to self-report problems with attention than teens without irritability. The authors noted that the findings are preliminary with small samples and stressed the importance of replicating this study with a larger sample size.

"Identifying factors such as these that may exacerbate issues teens experience after concussion may help in planning for the appropriate treatment and in making decisions about when to return to play and what accommodations are needed at school for these athletes," Koehl and Han said.

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

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