

Hit your head? Look for these warning signs of concussion

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(HealthDay)—If you or someone you know has suffered a concussion, a

medical evaluation is crucial, an expert says.

A [concussion](#) is "a short-lived functional brain [injury](#) typically caused by a bump or blow to the head," Cleveland Clinic [concussion](#) specialist Dr. Richard Figler said in a clinic news release.

"A concussion sets off a [chemical process](#) in the brain as it's trying to heal itself. During that process, and depending on what part of the brain was impacted, it can affect different functions like balance, memory, focus or even cause visual disturbances," Figler explained.

It's believed that between 1.6 million and 3.8 million concussions occur in the United States each year.

Signs and symptoms of a concussion can occur immediately, hours or even days after the initial injury to the head, Figler noted. Symptoms can change over time, depending on activity level and with other potentially associated injuries, making them difficult to recognize and [manage](#).

"Only about 5% to 10% of people who get concussions will experience [loss of consciousness](#)," Figler said. "[Loss of consciousness](#) does equal a concussion, but not having loss of consciousness does not mean you didn't have a concussion either."

He said that anyone who has any of the following signs and symptoms after a blow to the head or body may have a concussion and should be evaluated by a health care provider:

- **Signs:** dazed or stunned appearance; personality or [behavioral changes](#); confusion; loss of consciousness, even brief; clumsiness; forgetfulness; seeming "out of it"; forgetting events prior to or after the blow; slow response to questions or repeatedly asking questions.

- **Symptoms:** headache; nausea; balance problems; double, blurry or changed vision; sensitivity to light and/or noise; excessive fatigue/drowsiness; difficulty comprehending, concentrating and/or paying attention; irritability, nervousness; feeling increasingly emotional or sad; feeling just not right or "in a fog"; changes in sleep patterns.

More serious symptoms can appear in the first 24 to 48 hours after a head injury, so anyone suspected of sustaining a concussion should be monitored for worsening symptoms, Figler said.

Seek immediate medical attention if the following signs appear after a head injury: severe nausea or vomiting; pupils that are enlarged or unequal in size; unusual or bizarre behavior; inability to recognize people or places; seizures; severe dizziness or feeling lightheaded; progressively worsening headache; double or blurry vision; numbness or weakness in the arms or legs, clumsiness; excessive drowsiness or fainting; slurred speech; difficulty waking from sleep.

More information: For more on concussion, go to the [American Academy of Family Physicians](#).

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