

Concussion: Incidence, Definition, Causes

Incidence

Approximately 1.1 million people sustain a concussion each year

Causes

- Acceleration-deceleration movements (motor vehicle accidents)
- Striking the head against a hard surface
- Head being struck by an object
- Blasts
- Explosions

Definition

- Any period of loss of consciousness
- Any loss of memory for events immediately before or after the incident
- Any alteration in mental state at the time of the incident (i.e. feeling dazed, experiencing confusion, being uncertain in answering simple questions, having decreased clear thinking, and not being able to describe what happened before or after injury)

Concussion: Common symptoms

- Frontal release (or disinhibition meaning acting impulsively without reflecting on future consequences), lability (emotional expression), social inappropriateness, physically acting out.
- Fatigue, especially when significant concentration or high-level thinking is involved. The brain literally runs out of energy and individuals experience a shutdown of brain function.
- Changes in vision.
- Headaches. Can increase and worsen with physical and mental exertion because exercise and cognitive exertion increases blood flow through inflamed vessels which can cause pain.
- Changes in balance. Dizziness and poor balance.

Concussion: Typical Recovery & phases

Typical recovery

- Symptoms typically resolve within 7-10 days for an adult and up to 4 weeks in children
 - Headaches tend to persist longer than other symptoms
- The expectation is that the more recent the injury, the greater the number and severity of symptoms a person will have with both the number and severity decreasing over time.

Phases

Acute: 0-4 weeks

Postacute: 4-12 weeks

Persistent: 12+ weeks

Recommendations immediately after concussion

Brief period of rest (24-48 hours) and then gradual return to normal everyday activities and physical activities

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