

# Conversation Starters

## Learn, Quiz, Discuss

### Three Steps to “Start the Conversation” Around Concussion Awareness

Concussions are an everyday thing, but most people know very little about them. We’re here to help with that. Here are three steps to bolster your own concussion awareness, and help you teach others in your community about concussion.

- step 1** Learn about concussions with the overview, statistics, myths and facts below. If you’re looking for even more info, head to the [Concussion Awareness Now website](#).
- step 2** Quiz your family, friends, teachers, and coaches on what they know by using the provided quiz.
- step 3** Discuss their results. Was there anything surprising they learned? Was there new information they didn’t know? How will they use the information in conversations in their community?

**Educating ourselves—and the people closest to us—is the best way to start the concussion conversation.**

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## Concussion Basics

- A concussion is an injury to the brain. They occur when your brain moves in ways it shouldn’t, causing damage to the superhighway of neurons you depend on every day. That damage can change the way you act, think, and feel.
- Concussions are the most common type of traumatic brain injury (TBI).<sup>1</sup>
- Concussions are sometimes called “mild traumatic brain injuries (mTBIs). “Mild” refers to the fact that concussions are not generally life threatening. That doesn’t mean they’re not serious. In fact, they can be devastating if not attended to properly.<sup>2</sup>
- Concussions occur when there’s a sudden impact from a fall, bump, hit, or jolt that causes the brain to bounce around or twist inside the skull. In some cases, the brain may strike the inner skull, or the head may also decelerate and stop its motion, causing the brain to hit the opposite side of the skull.
- Concussions can happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere. Falls during everyday activities—walking to the car, or tripping on a toy at home, for example, account for nearly half of all concussions in the United States.
- 53% of people who suspect they have a concussion never get it checked. That means 1 in 2 concussions are ignored.<sup>3</sup>
- Falls are the #1 cause of concussions, and the leading cause of injury among older adults ages 65+. According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 1 in 4 older adults fall every year in the United States, and 1 in 5 falls leads to serious injury.<sup>4</sup> Falls are the most common cause of head injury in children and adolescents as well.<sup>5</sup>

# Concussion **Symptoms**

- The #1 reason people don't seek care for concussions is because they don't believe symptoms are severe enough.<sup>6</sup>
- There are several concussion symptoms to be aware of, not just for yourself, but for others:

## **In Yourself**

- ▶ Headaches
- ▶ Vision issues
- ▶ Nausea or vomiting
- ▶ Dizziness or feeling off-balance
- ▶ Exhaustion
- ▶ Sensitivity to noise or light
- ▶ Personality changes or irritability
- ▶ Mental fog or concentration problems
- ▶ Clumsiness
- ▶ Emotions out of whack
- ▶ Changes to sleep

## **In others:**

- ▶ Loss of consciousness (even briefly)
- ▶ Slow to answer questions
- ▶ Slowed reaction time
- ▶ Confusion
- ▶ Forgetfulness
- ▶ Personality changes or irritability
- ▶ In toddlers and infants, additional red flags include:
  - ▶ Crying without being able to be consoled
  - ▶ Refusing to nurse or eat

- Every concussion is different, and symptoms can develop immediately or over time. For some people, hours or even days may pass before warning signs show up.

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# Concussion **Myths**

- **84% of people believe** athletes are most at risk for concussion. In reality, only 3% of concussions that present to the ER are sports-related.<sup>7</sup>
- **56% of people think** you have to hit your head in order to sustain a concussion. Not true—concussions can result from a sudden jolt to the body as well as a hit on the head.<sup>8</sup>
- **13% of people think** that all concussions result in a loss of consciousness. Concussions have many possible symptoms. Loss of consciousness is only one of them, and most people don't lose consciousness when suffering a concussion.<sup>9</sup>
- **Concussions aren't always detectable** on CT or MRI scans. These scans are looking for brain bleeds, skull fractures, and other acute trauma. Not all brain injuries, and especially not concussions, will appear on these scans. A clean CT or MRI does not eliminate the possibility of brain injury.<sup>10</sup>

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# **The reality?** Concussions can be an invisible injury.

For all the ways to start the conversation about concussion awareness and prevention, there's an important way to wrap it up: by telling the people in your life that if they suspect they may have a concussion, **get it checked**. If you need to take action and seek medical assistance, [here's what to do](#).

## **References**

- 1 & 2: <https://www.biausa.org/brain-injury/about-brain-injury/what-is-a-brain-injury/concussion-mtbi/concussion-information>
- 3 & 6: <https://concussionawarenessnow.org/>
- 4: <https://www.cdc.gov/falls/data-research/index.html>
- 5: <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/head-injury-in-children-and-adolescents-beyond-the-basics/print>
- 7, 8 & 9: [https://concussionawarenessnow.org/wp-content/uploads/CAN\\_DitchTheMyths\\_Infographic\\_No1.pdf](https://concussionawarenessnow.org/wp-content/uploads/CAN_DitchTheMyths_Infographic_No1.pdf)
- 10: <https://www.biausa.org/public-affairs/media/true-or-false-seven-common-myths-about-brain-injury>

# Test Your Knowledge

How Much Do You Know About Concussions?

## Fact or Myth?

- \_\_\_\_\_ **1** Concussions are the most common type of traumatic brain injury.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **2** Over half of people who think they might have a concussion never get it checked.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **3** You'll know if you have a concussion, because you'll notice the symptoms right away.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **4** Sports-related injuries are the leading cause of concussions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **5** You can suffer a concussion even if you didn't hit your head.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **6** In order to have a concussion, you need to have lost consciousness.

# Answer Key

- 1. FACT.** That's why it's so important to understand how they happen, what the symptoms are, and how to treat them!
- 2. FACT.** 1 out of 2 concussions are ignored. The #1 reason why people don't seek care for concussions is because their symptoms aren't severe enough.
- 3. MYTH.** Every concussion is different, and symptoms can develop immediately or over time. For some people, hours or even days may pass before they experience symptoms.
- 4. MYTH.** The leading cause of concussions (and all brain injury) are falls during everyday activities.
- 5. FACT.** Concussions can result from a sudden jolt to the body or from any rapid movement in the head.
- 6. MYTH.** Concussions have a variety of symptoms. Loss of consciousness is only one of them.

**CONCUSSION  
AWARENESS NOW**

## Interested in planning an event in conjunction with National Concussion Awareness Day? **We can help!**

The Concussion Awareness Now (CAN) team has planned our fair share of events, and now we're passing on everything we know to you! Whether you're hosting something in honor of National Concussion Awareness Day on Friday, September 20 or planning an event on your own timeline, use our checklist to ensure you have the best event possible!

### Event Logistics

- **Identify the event's purpose.** Is it to create awareness around concussion? Is there a fundraising element? Once you determine the goal of the event, it'll be much easier to plan!
- **Consider the event size.** How many people are you hoping will attend? This will help you decide where you'll hold the event and what type of supplies you'll need.
- **Determine your audience.** Who is your target audience for the event? Are you looking to attract people from your local community? Students, teachers, and staff at your high school or college? This will help you make decisions on the activities that will take place.
- **Plan the event's activities.** Activities might include having a speaker for your event, a table or booth with concussion information, or a giveaway.
- **Think through any potential partnerships.** Are there community organizations, school groups, or local businesses that it might make sense to partner with for your event?
- **Calculate the number of volunteers you'll need.** From helping with promotion to setting up for the event itself, it's always good to have extra pairs of hands!

### Event Promotion

- **Send information out about the event to your local news outlets.** It's not guaranteed that they'll cover the event, but they might be able to print the event information in your local paper, or mention it in a video or newscast.
- **Send email communications to those you want to attend.** In your emails, clearly state the event's date, time, and purpose; any planned activities, and any fundraising information if applicable.
- **Create digital and printed flyers or collateral.** Send digital flyers as part of your email communications, and print off additional flyers to hang up at schools, grocery stores, libraries, and anywhere else your potential attendees visit regularly.
- **Use social media to spread the word.** Share about the event on your organization or business page as well as your personal pages, and encourage friends, family, and coworkers to share as well. If you're partnering with a local organization, create and share images and post copy to make it easier to spread the word!



## Fundraising Logistics

- **Identify if you'd like to fundraise as part of your event.** The Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA) is the co-chair of the Concussion Awareness Now coalition. Any donations to BIAA helps us work to educate the public with ongoing support, information, and resources. We'd love to have your support!
- **Share fundraising information at the event or online.** If you do plan to fundraise, the easiest way is to direct potential donors to BIAA's online giving platform, where champions can create a personalized fundraising page for the cause. You can either share your page's link, or create a QR code to share on any posters or collateral.

## Giveaways & Information

- **Determine any giveaways or swag.** CAN has a limited amount of giveaways that we can supply upon request. If you are hosting an event, CAN can send you a Champion t-shirt to wear at your event! If you'd like to learn more about the items we have and submit a request, please email Project Director Gina Peattie at [gpeattie@biausa.org](mailto:gpeattie@biausa.org)!
- **Identify the information you'd like to share.** CAN also has several one-page informational sheets about concussion prevention that can be downloaded from our website and printed. Head to [CAN's website](#) to take advantage of all of our resources.

## After the Event

- **Send an event recap and photos to your local press.** They might be willing to report on your event after it happens!
- **Amplify the event's success through social media.** Make sure to tag any partner organizations or fundraising beneficiaries in your posts.
- **One final step: be sure to let CAN know about your event!** We love when individuals, organizations, and businesses take the initiative to help people become more aware of concussion prevention and treatment. Email a short event recap and any photos or video you'd like to share to Project Director Gina Peattie at [gpeattie@biausa.org](mailto:gpeattie@biausa.org), and the event might just make its way onto the Concussion Awareness Now social media pages, newsletter, or in an upcoming email!

## Event Types

### Need to start brainstorming?

These sample events will give you a good head start:

- A presentation at your school or in your community
- A meeting with your child's sports team or staff
- An information table at a hospital, library, or other community location
- A panel of speakers, featuring healthcare professionals and/or people who have been affected by a concussion

**CONCUSSION  
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[concussionawarenessnow.org](http://concussionawarenessnow.org)

# How Can You “Start the Conversation” Around Concussion Awareness?

As we prepare for National Concussion Awareness Day on Friday, September 20, we want to make sure that our CAN Champions are well-equipped with the information and resources needed to start the conversation with their friends, families, and communities.

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**First, we invite you to become a Concussion Awareness Now (CAN) Champion if you aren't already.** Better yet: ask your friends and family to join you! Set a goal to invite five people you know and help us grow our base before National Concussion Awareness Day. Being a CAN Champion means you'll always have access to the latest CAN news, events, and opportunities. **Join our cause [here](#).**

**Next, plan the way you'll start the conversation around concussion awareness.**

We've outlined a list of ideas both big and small to get you started:

## Offline Opportunities

- **Commit to talking to one friend or family member.** Maybe it's your sister who plays sports, or a friend who's planning a hike. No matter who the person may be, make it a goal to talk to someone important in your life about what a concussion actually is, what the signs are, and what to do if they think they might have one. Read up on the answers to all of those questions on the [CAN website](#).
- **Plan an in-person event.** From a low-key community discussion to a more robust event featuring concussion experts in your community and other activities, an event is a great opportunity to get a bunch of people together to learn more about concussions. If you're considering an event, we have an entire Event Planning resource to get you started!
- **Ask to hang posters and leave behind resources.** Your doctor's office, favorite grocery store, your local library, your gym, your bank—these are all places where many people go on a daily basis. The CAN website has several options for posters and information sheets, **so be sure to check those out.**

## Online Opportunities

- **Share how you're “starting the conversation” on social media.** Download one of these posters, fill it out with the reason why concussion awareness is important to you, snap a selfie, and post it on your social media channels.
- **Plan a digital event.** If you or someone you know has been affected by a concussion, consider partnering with them to have a conversation through a “broadcast” on Instagram, Facebook, or even LinkedIn. Personal stories create even more connection. Be sure to tag Concussion Awareness Now on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or [LinkedIn](#), and use the hashtags [#StartTheConversation](#) and [#ConcussionAwarenessNow](#).
- **Consider fundraising to support concussion awareness and encourage people to donate to the Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA).** The Brain Injury Association of America is the co-chair of the Concussion Awareness Now coalition and together, we work to reach the public, healthcare professionals, survivors, caregivers, and others with ongoing information, support, and resources. With your help, we can do more to spread the word.