

# 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.**

## 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.

# 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>

# **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.