

Get the Facts on Concussions & Falls

What is a **concussion**?

A concussion is an **injury to the brain**.

- Sudden impact from a fall, bump, hit, or jolt causes the brain to bounce around or twist inside the skull.
- The brain may strike the inner skull.
- The head may also decelerate and stop its motion, causing the brain to hit the opposite side of the skull.

This can cause changes in the brain, damaging cells, and creating potentially serious effects. For some people, symptoms may develop immediately. For others, hours or even days may pass before warning signs show up.



Fall



Hit



Jolt

How are concussions and falls **linked**?

Falls are the **#1 cause** of concussion.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), falls are the leading cause of injury among older adults age 65+ with 36 million falls reported each year in this age group.

More than 1 in 4 older adults fall every year in the United States, and 1 in 5 falls leads to serious injury. In addition, persons with brain injuries are at high risk for falls and a subsequent fall can make an existing head injury worse.

Taking steps to lower the risk of falling also helps to lower the risk of sustaining a concussion.

To **reduce the risk** of falling and sustaining a concussion, what actions should be taken?

Talking with your doctor about falls, engaging in strength and balance exercises, managing medications, having vision and hearing checked regularly and making living environments safer, and asking for help are all steps that can be taken to prevent a fall.

Over half of falls take place at home. Regularly checking for fall risks at home and addressing potential hazards like clutter, throw rugs, and poor lighting is recommended.

Ageing adults are encouraged to seek support from family members and/or healthcare providers to address concerns about the risk of falling. Ask family members for help with preventive measures, such as making home modifications and removing hazards.

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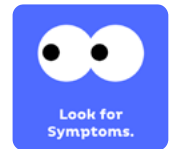
What actions should be taken **if someone falls** and hits their head?

Over half of people who think they have a concussion never seek medical care, most commonly because they do not think their symptoms are severe enough. The reality is that concussions can be an invisible and often symptomless injury with serious and long-term consequences. **It is important to get checked by a medical professional.**

In some instances, a blow to the head can cause a type of bleeding near the brain, called a subdural hematoma. Subdural hematomas can be life-threatening, so it's important to see a healthcare provider immediately if your symptoms are severe.

Concussion symptoms, such as dizziness, confusion, or vision issues, may look like signs of typical aging and can be missed or misdiagnosed. Additionally, aging adults may be reluctant to seek medical care for fear of losing independence, not wanting to burden their family, financial considerations, and other reasons. However, the consequences of inaction can jeopardize long-term health.

It is critical that if a person sustains a hit or blow to the head, they seek medical care to ensure accurate diagnosis, treatment, and recovery planning.



Need additional help?

For more information on resources and support, call the National Brain Injury Information Center helpline at

1.800.444.6443

Join the cause as a Concussion Awareness Now (CAN) **Champion!**

Concussion Awareness Now (CAN), co-chaired by Abbott and the Brain Injury Association of America, is a coalition of nearly 20 advocacy groups, including the National Council on Aging, that is **raising awareness** about the importance of diagnosis and treatment for concussions.

Help spread CAN's message by signing up to be a CAN Champion! Champions will receive up-to-date information including new resources, tools, and education opportunities.



Resources:

Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA) offers many concussion resources on their website: <https://www.biausa.org/brain-injury/about-brain-injury/what-is-a-brain-injury/concussion-mtbi>. Additional BIAA resources include webinars and support resources for patients and caregivers, and a variety of professional program offerings, including a concussion certificate and training for professionals working in the field of brain injury.

National Council on Aging (NCOA) offers a resource, "A Guide to Traumatic Brain Injury Resources for Older Adults and Caregivers," available on the NCOA website. The guide provides listings of organizations that provide resources for older adults with traumatic brain injury (TBI), caregivers and families, and professionals. <https://www.ncoa.org/article/a-guide-to-traumatic-brain-injury-resources-for-older-adults-and-caregivers>.

