

How do I know if I have a concussion after a car accident?

Our lawyers explain what to do if you suspect you have a head injury

One of the most common – and most misunderstood – injuries sustained in a car accident is a concussion. Some people think concussions are not that serious, especially since terms like “mild concussion” or “mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI)” are sometimes used to describe certain types of concussions.

A concussion can often have serious, long-term consequences if not treated properly in a timely manner. In particular, someone can sustain permanent brain damage in certain circumstances due to an untreated head injury. That’s why it’s important to know the symptoms and warning signs for a concussion and to get the medical care you need right away.

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI). In particular, a concussion often occurs due to a blow to the head or the brain being violently shaken, resulting in an injury caused by the brain coming into contact with the skull.

Concussions are especially common in car accidents since these collisions often involve a vehicle suddenly slowing down due to crashing into another vehicle. When this happens, the driver or passengers can get violently thrown forward, causing the brain to rapidly accelerate and slam into the skull.

What are common warning signs?

If you sustained a concussion in an accident, there are often certain warning signs that you have a brain injury. Such symptoms may include:

- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Blurred vision
- Lightheadedness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Slurred speech
- Amnesia, including no memory of the accident
- Confusion or difficulty concentrating

If something doesn’t feel right, take your concussion symptoms seriously right from the start. Seek immediate medical attention, including going to an emergency room if you believe you have a severe head injury. If not treated right away, many head injuries can result in serious, long-term health problems or even death in certain circumstances.

How can I tell if my head injury is severe or mild?

It can be very hard to tell if you have a mild or severe concussion. Sometimes, the symptoms are similar. That's why it's critical that you seek immediate medical attention if you believe you have a head injury due to a car accident.

Doctors can perform a variety of medical tests to determine if you have a concussion and the severity of your injury. Sometimes, this involves administering imaging tests, which take a picture of your brain and any brain damage sustained in an accident. Such tests often include:

- Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)
- Cranial computerized tomography (CT) scan
- X-ray

Other times, a doctor might perform a neurological exam in which they evaluate your vision, hearing, balance and other physical attributes. Medical professionals also often administer cognitive tests, which evaluate your ability to concentrate or remember information.

How do you treat a concussion?

Many times, physicians keep someone with a concussion overnight in a hospital for 24 hours to observe them and make sure their symptoms do not get worse. Other times, people with a concussion are sent home but must be kept under close observation in case their symptoms get worse.

Very often, treatment of a concussion involves taking time to rest and recover after an accident. During the first 48 hours in particular, people with a concussion are often advised to rest and not engage in any strenuous physical or mental activity. This often includes not watching television or playing video games.

After the first 48 hours, many doctors advise people with a concussion to gradually introduce moderate physical and mental activities. However, each case can be very different since the severity of someone's concussion can vary significantly from one person to another. That's why it's critical that you carefully follow your doctor's advice after a serious concussion.

How much is my claim worth?

There's no set dollar amount when it comes to injury claims involving a concussion sustained in a car accident. Sometimes, such accident claims are worth a few thousand dollars. Other times, your injury claim might be significantly more.

The bottom line is you should be financially compensated for all your expenses if another driver caused your accident. This is especially true in a state like Texas, which has a fault-based insurance system. That means the injury victim seeks compensation from the at-fault driver's insurance company.

Your expenses can cover a wide range, including money to repair or replace your vehicle and all past and future medical bills related to your concussion. You should also be financially compensated for any lost income if you cannot work while recovering from your accident. If there's a bill associated with your crash, the at-fault driver's insurance company should pay it.

How can a lawyer help me?

You might think you don't need a lawyer if another driver clearly caused the accident that resulted in your concussion. Many car accident claims often turn out to be far more complicated than many people expect, however. Sometimes, the at-fault driver is the problem, especially if they deny doing anything wrong. Other times, it might be their insurance company, who will often do everything they can to reduce or deny your claim.

When you have an aggressive attorney on your side, you can dictate what happens after your accident. Instead of simply accepting whatever settlement you may be offered, your lawyer can negotiate on your behalf and demand more money. If the other driver's insurance company refuses to increase their settlement offer, your attorney can file a lawsuit or take other legal action on your behalf.

Learn more about how a lawyer can help you if you sustained a concussion in a car crash. Schedule an appointment with Smith & Hassler, Attorneys at Law, in Houston. We can review your case and explain the legal options available to you. Contact us and schedule a free consultation today.