

## Preventing Workplace Concussions

No matter the workplace, concussions can occur. In fact, every three minutes, someone in the United Kingdom is admitted to hospital with a head injury, according to the most recent data from Headway, a UK-wide charity that works to improve life after brain injury. Head injuries range in severity from mild to serious, and can lead to serious medical issues for your employees.

Understanding concussions, which the NHS defines as a minor traumatic brain injury, and knowing what to look for can help keep your employees safe and happy, as well as help prevent financial loss.

### Concussions and How They Occur

Concussions are a type of brain injury that occurs when the brain shakes inside the skull. Generally, concussions are caused by severe blows to the head or body. In the event of such force, the spinal fluid that surrounds the brain is unable to act as a cushion and severe damage to the brain, blood vessels and nerves can occur.

Most often, workplace concussions are caused by falls, being struck by or against an object, and by motor vehicle collisions. However, the main causes of work-related concussions vary by industry and occupation.

### Signs and Symptoms

Concussions often have subtle signs and symptoms, which can make them difficult to recognise and diagnose. Knowing what to look for

can make all the difference in protecting employees. Common concussion symptoms include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Headaches or head pressure
- Loss of consciousness
- Confusion
- Amnesia
- Dizziness
- Ringing in the ears

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**The frequency of head injuries in the United Kingdom has increased by 6 per cent in the last decade, according to the most recent data.**

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- Nausea or vomiting
- Slurred speech
- Sensitivity to light and/or sound
- Fatigue

### Responding to Workplace Concussions

When you suspect that an employee has sustained a concussion, it is important to take action quickly. An individual suffering from a concussion should not be left alone or be allowed

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to drive. In the event of a concussion, supervisors should be notified as soon as possible so the victim can be monitored closely and potentially brought to the nearest accident and emergency department.

After sustaining a concussion, employees should go home to recover and not return to work until their symptoms subside. In general, the recovery period for concussions is short; however, for some, symptoms can linger for weeks or months, making it difficult to handle day-to-day work activities.

While most people recover from concussions without having to go to hospital, employees should be instructed to seek medical attention immediately if they experience the following:

- Loss of consciousness for 30 seconds or more
- A progressively worsening headache
- Changes in behaviour, such as irritability, restlessness or anxiety
- Poor coordination, such as stumbling or poor balance
- Extreme confusion or disorientation
- Slurring or slowing of speech
- Prolonged nausea or vomiting

### Preventing Workplace Concussions

In most cases, concussions in the workplace are caused by avoidable accidents. Even taking the simplest precautions can help prevent serious accidents. To keep employees safe, employers should do the following:

- Be aware of and address tripping hazards, such as clutter, cables and standing water.

Use signs to communicate these hazards to employees.

- Keep shelves, storage areas, workspaces and stairways clean to prevent objects from falling. Whenever possible, store heavy objects on the floor or on low shelves.
- Educate employees on the importance of sturdy footwear, especially if they work in a slippery or rugged environment.
- Make fall protection equipment mandatory if employees work at heights.
- If applicable, provide properly fitted hard hats and other personal protective equipment that is in good condition in order to protect your employees' heads.
- Encourage employees to report any unsafe conditions to their supervisors immediately.

Concussions can occur in any industry—no matter if you manage an office or oversee a construction site. Do not assume that your workplace is immune. For more information on protecting the health of your employees, contact the insurance professionals at **Crendon Insurance Brokers Ltd** today.



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