

Can Minor Concussions Lead to Long-Term Car Accident Injuries?

Get an attorney you can trust to take your concussion case seriously in Pittsburgh

After a [car accident](#), you might feel lucky to have only a “minor” concussion, especially compared to more obvious injuries such as broken bones. But don’t let the word “minor” fool you. Any concussion is a traumatic brain injury, and even mild ones can lead to serious, long-term complications.

The fact is there is no such thing as a minor concussion. If you were involved in a crash in Pittsburgh, it’s important to know how a seemingly mild concussion can result in lasting effects, what symptoms to look out for, and how to protect your health and legal rights if you’ve been injured.

What is a concussion and why isn’t it always minor?

A concussion is classified as a mild traumatic brain injury (mild TBI). It happens when a sudden impact or jolt causes the brain to shift or twist inside the skull. In car accidents, this might occur when your head strikes a surface or is violently shaken. The injury causes chemical changes in the brain and can damage brain cells. While concussions don’t usually show up on standard brain scans, the effects can be very real.

Symptoms might include confusion, memory gaps, dizziness, headaches, nausea, blurred vision, fatigue, or feeling “off.” Some people lose consciousness, while others don’t. Many recover within 10 to 14 days, but others don’t bounce back so quickly. Recovery can depend on age, past brain injuries, the force of the impact, and emotional stress.

A particularly tricky aspect of concussions is that symptoms can be delayed. You might feel fine right after the crash, only to experience worsening headaches or fogginess a day later. This is why even if you think you’re okay, it’s important to get checked by a doctor after hitting your head. You also need to be extremely cautious not to sustain a second concussion before fully healing. That second hit, even if mild, can cause much more damage than the first. Doctors refer to this as second-impact syndrome, and it can be fatal.

What long-term symptoms can follow a “minor” concussion?

While most people with concussions recover without complications, a significant number experience symptoms that persist for months or longer. If symptoms last beyond three months, doctors may diagnose post-concussion syndrome (PCS). This condition can disrupt daily life and limit your ability to work or function.

Some of the most common long-term PCS effects include:

- **Chronic headaches:** These are one of the most common long-term symptoms. They can feel like migraines or tension headaches and may occur daily.
- **Memory and concentration problems:** Many people find it harder to focus, remember tasks, or think clearly after a concussion. Some describe it as a mental fog. Even a year later, subtle brain changes may still be visible on scans.
- **Dizziness and balance issues:** Some car accident victims report feeling unsteady or lightheaded for weeks or months after a head injury.
- **Emotional changes:** Depression, anxiety, irritability, and mood swings are common. These can be caused by chemical changes in the brain or by the stress of dealing with ongoing symptoms.
- **Sleep disturbances:** Some people can't fall or stay asleep. Others feel unusually tired all day. Poor sleep can make other symptoms worse.
- **Sensitivity to light and sound:** Bright lights and loud noises may become overwhelming. For some, this fades over time. For others, it becomes a lasting challenge.

Who is at risk for PCS?

One risk factor for PCS is having had previous concussions. If someone has a history of head injuries from sports, past accidents, or other trauma, a new concussion (even a minor one) can add to cumulative brain damage. Multiple concussions increase the risk of long-term conditions such as chronic traumatic encephalopathy, though this is more common in athletes with repeated injuries over time.

Still, even a one-time concussion from a car accident can cause long-term problems if not managed properly. That's why it's important to take every head injury seriously, especially if symptoms don't go away quickly.

How should I handle a concussion after a car accident?

First and foremost, seek medical attention. You may not need a CT or MRI scan, but a doctor can evaluate your symptoms, perform a neurological exam, and monitor your recovery. They'll advise rest, which includes avoiding physical exertion, limiting screen time and reading, and anything else that strains your brain.

If your symptoms worsen (for example, repeated vomiting, one pupil is larger than the other, or trouble waking up), get emergency help immediately. Those can be signs of a more serious brain injury like bleeding inside the skull.

Even with mild symptoms, keep a detailed record. Document every headache, every day you feel foggy, and any time you miss work or struggle to perform basic tasks. These records can be incredibly important later if your symptoms linger or you pursue a legal claim.

What treatments are available for post-concussion symptoms?

Recovery from a concussion is different for everyone. Some people get better with rest and time. Others may need specialized therapy. If symptoms continue after a few weeks, talk to your doctor about additional support.

Here are some possible treatments:

- **Vestibular therapy:** This helps with dizziness and balance issues. A trained physical therapist can guide you through exercises that retrain your brain and body.
- **Cognitive therapy:** For memory problems or mental fog, neuropsychologists can help you regain mental clarity and develop strategies to manage your symptoms.
- **Medication:** You may be prescribed medication to manage headaches, anxiety, depression, or sleep disturbances.
- **Mental health counseling:** It's normal to feel anxious, depressed, or frustrated during recovery. Talking to a therapist can help. Psychological stress can also make symptoms worse, so addressing mental health is part of treating the injury.

The key is to follow up. Keep seeing your doctor, and don't be afraid to ask for a referral to a specialist. You know your body best, and if you're not improving, speak up.

Why should I document and report concussion symptoms?

From a legal standpoint, documenting your symptoms is a must for your claim. Insurance companies often try to downplay the impact of concussions because they don't show up on X-rays and aren't always visible to others. That makes your medical records and personal notes key evidence.

If another driver caused your crash, and your concussion is interfering with your ability to work, sleep, or enjoy life, you may be entitled to compensation. This could cover medical bills, lost income, and pain and suffering. But to build a strong case, your attorney will need proof. Keep a journal, follow your doctor's advice, and get any recommended evaluations or therapy.

Neuropsychological testing can be particularly valuable. These tests assess memory, focus, processing speed, and other cognitive functions. If you're still struggling months after the crash, this kind of testing can show objectively how your brain is functioning and how your car accident changed that.

A lawyer can help you gather medical records, work with specialists, and present your case clearly. They can also deal with insurance companies who may try to downplay your injuries. With the right support, you can focus on healing while your legal team fights for the compensation you need.

Seek help from a Pittsburgh attorney who fight for the compensation you deserve

Too often, insurance companies dismiss concussions as minor. But [Romanow Law Group](#) knows the truth. Even a so-called “mild” brain injury can have major consequences. Our attorneys will build a strong case to reflect the real impact your concussion has had on your life.

Our law firm works on a contingency fee basis, so you don’t pay anything unless they win. That means our legal team is just as invested in your recovery as you are. We take every case seriously and won’t back down from insurance companies. If you’re struggling after a car accident, we’re here to help you every step of the way.

To get started, [contact us online](#) or call today for a free consultation. Let our Pittsburgh car accident lawyers go to work for you. You focus on healing while we handle the legal battle.

“David and his Associates are amazing... I would recommend them to anyone, they had my case settled in under 6 months and kept good communication with me the whole time...very professional and passionate about what they do.” - A.H., ★ ★ ★ ★ ★