



## More Than Just Bumping Your Head

### Benjamin H. Venger, MD, FACS

Head trauma is the most common cause of brain injury in young adults. The severity of this trauma can parallel the risk of serious brain injury. Most head injuries, fortunately, result in nothing more than a headache and "knot" on the head. Loss of consciousness is the main factor to judge the severity of the head injury.

In most cases, loss of consciousness is brief (less than a minute), and other than a "postconcussive syndrome", no other problems will occur. If loss of consciousness is longer (up to five minutes), prolonged headaches, as well as difficulties with concentration, memory, and sleep can occur. These symptoms can last up to six months.

If loss of consciousness is significantly longer, the patient should be taken to the hospital. Damage to a specific area of the brain can occur, leading to a contusion (or bruise) on the brain, or a blood clot outside of the brain compressing it. Neurologic worsening can occur rapidly, with the onset of symptoms such as seizures, weakness, speech problems, confusion and the development of a coma. Any of these symptoms can represent a life threatening situation, and should be treated as such. In older individuals, these symptoms may be of very gradual onset, and not occur for weeks to months after the injury has taken place.

In any age group recent alcohol or drug use, in addition to the head injury, may contribute to this loss of consciousness. If any question of drug use or intoxication arises, please seek medical attention following head injury. Do not assume the individual is impaired due to these substances.

If there is a suspicion that you or someone you know may have more than just a "bump on the head", please contact Drs. Venger, Anson or Duke at (800) 334-0878. Our offices are located in Laughlin, Bullhead City, Kingman, Lake Havasu, and Needles for your convenience.