

Concussion Information Handout

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury and is the most common form of head injury suffered by athletes. A concussion can be caused by a direct or indirect hit to the head, neck, jaw, face or body. While most concussions occur after contact with an athlete's head, a concussion can occur without contact to the head. This can occur after a fall or check onto the body of the athlete if the athlete's head and neck change speeds (speed up or slow down) rapidly enough.

A concussion causes a change in brain function which results in a variety of symptoms (see below). In the minutes, days, and sometimes weeks following a concussion, brain cells remain in a **vulnerable state**. This means the brain cells are more easily damaged if another injury occurs.

List of common symptoms and signs of a concussion*:

Symptoms	Signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headaches• Nausea, vomiting• Dizziness• Confusion• Amnesia (forgets recent events)• Fatigue or drowsiness• Light headedness• More irritable• Blurred vision• Seeing bright lights or stars• Sensitivity to light, sound or movement• Feeling of being stunned• Sleep disturbances <p>Note: symptoms and signs can be delayed and may only occur minutes to hours to sometimes days after an injury.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty concentrating• Inappropriate playing behavior in sport• Disorientation (not sure of day, time or place)• Difficulty performing daily activities• Decreased attention and memory• Decreased intellectual ability (e.g., unable to do school work)• Vacant stare• Clumsiness• Answers questions slowly• Loss of consciousness <p>Note: a loss of consciousness is not necessary for the diagnosis of a concussion</p>

**Other symptoms and signs of a concussion may occur.*

Who to tell and why:

It is extremely important to seek medical advice after any blow to the head or body in which you suffer signs and symptoms of a concussion. *Symptoms may actually be worse later the same day of injury or even the next day.*

It is important to tell a **family member, coach, trainer, therapist or doctor** if you think you have symptoms of a possible concussion. If you think you have had a symptom of concussion, you should immediately remove yourself from the game or practice and tell the coach, parent, teammate, therapist or doctor how you are feeling. You should be evaluated by a medical professional before restarting any exercise or returning to your sport.

Helping Teammates, Players, Family Members

As a teammate, parent/guardian, or coach, you have an important role in helping identify a possible concussion. You must alert the coach, trainer, therapist or doctor if you notice an athlete who is experiencing signs or symptoms of a concussion.

In addition to the symptoms and signs listed in the table above, these are some of the visible or common behaviors of a concussed athlete which can be observed by others around them:

- Remains motionless on playing surface after contact
- Slow to stand up after contact
- Grabbing or rubbing head/helmet after contact
- Dazed or stunned appearance
- Change in the level of consciousness (seems sleepy or too quiet)
- Confusion
- Forgets plays
- Unsure of score, game, opponent
- Clumsy or uncoordinated
- Answers more slowly than usual
- Asks same questions over and over
- Irritable, sad, more emotional than usual

Understanding the Risks of a Concussion

When you have a concussion, your **THRESHOLD FOR ANOTHER CONCUSSION IS MUCH LOWER**. This means another brain injury can happen easier and with much less force than it would normally take for you to suffer a concussion. Following a concussion, the **BRAIN NEEDS TIME TO HEAL**.

- A complete recovery following a concussion is necessary before returning to sporting activities. A period of physical and mental rest is highly recommended.
- Continuing to play while still having symptoms of a concussion will result in a longer recovery time. This will affect your performance in school and will delay your ability to return to work, exercise, sports, and other recreational activities.
- Cumulative effects in the brain may result if a second concussion occurs while you are still recovering from the first concussion. Because your concussion threshold is lower, you can suffer another concussion with much less force than was required to suffer the original concussion.
- Sustaining a repeat blow to the head while recovering from a concussion can result in a catastrophic outcome known as *second-impact syndrome*.

When Dealing with a possible Concussion, it is better to be safe than sorry. As the saying goes “WHEN IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT!!”

RED FLAGS

Problems can occasionally happen during the first 24-48 hours following a concussion. If the injured athlete exhibits any of the following symptoms, even after a medical evaluation, a rapid return to the Emergency Department is indicated:

- Increasing headache, especially if localized
- Persistent vomiting
- Behavioral changes (becoming more emotional or agitated)
- Becoming more drowsy (difficult to arouse)
- Difficulty seeing, hearing, speaking, or walking
- Seizure
- New confusion or disorientation (does not recognize people or places)
- New onset of numbness or weakness in an arm or leg