



Concussion

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a mild brain injury. It is caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head, or by a hit to the body or fall that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. Often concussions are described as being “mild” but their affects can be serious. You can lose consciousness or be “knocked out” as a result of a concussion but this is not true in most cases.

What should you do if you have had a concussion? Take care of yourself after the injury and get evaluated by a medical professional. Go to the emergency room or make an appointment with your primary care doctor.



Don't wait if you see any of the below danger signs!

- Seizures (Convulsions) or Fixed Stares
- Pupils That Are Different Sizes
- Blood or Clear Liquid from the Nose or Ears
- Repeated Vomiting
- Severe Headaches That Get Worse
- Loss of Consciousness
- Sharply Increased Confusion, Agitation, Restlessness
- Weakness or Numbness in Arms or Legs
- Slurred Speech

The most common symptoms that result from a concussion are:

- Problems with thinking or remembering – feeling “foggy” or not remembering what happened.
- Physical problems such as headaches, sensitivity to light or loud noises.
- Changes in mood – feeling anxious, irritable, sad or nervous.
- Difficulty with sleep- feeling tired all the time and sleeping often or having difficulty sleeping.

Most people who have had a concussion recover quickly and fully but for some people symptoms can last for days, weeks or longer. Recovery may be longer for the elderly, teens and young children. If you

have had a concussion in the past you are at a higher risk to have another concussion and take longer to recover. Some of the symptoms might show up right away or they may appear later, especially if you try to return to normal activity too quickly.

Recovering from a concussion:



***Rest** – allows the brain to heal. Not sleeping after a concussion or needing to wake an individual periodically is a myth unless directed by a physician to do so. Slowly and gradually return to normal activity and if symptoms return or get worse you are doing too much too soon.

***Avoid physically demanding activities**, you are at risk to having another concussion.

***Avoid driving, riding a bike or operating equipment** – you may not realize it but after a concussion your balance and reaction time can be affected.

*** Alcohol and other drugs may slow your recovery** and may put you at risk for further injury.

If symptoms do not resolve you may need to seek additional medical help. The Brain Injury Association of Virginia can connect you to a brain injury specialist for additional treatment.

SYMPTOMS OF CONCUSSION:



COGNITIVE

Difficulty thinking clearly, feeling slowed down, difficulty concentrating, difficulty remembering new information, confusion or feeling as if in a fog

SLEEP

Sleeping more than usual, sleeping less than usual, trouble falling asleep



EMOTIONAL

Irritability, sadness, more emotional, nervousness/anxiety



PHYSICAL

Headache, fuzzy/blurred vision, nausea/vomiting (early on), dizziness, sensitivity to noise or light, balance problems, feeling tired or no energy



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What is an important thing parents, teachers, and coaches should know about concussion?

If an athlete is suspected of having sustained a concussion during play then the very first rule is to remove the player from ALL play. The next step is to get an evaluation from a healthcare professional trained in concussion management. More information about concussion in school sports can be found on the CDC Website

When should you return to school or work?

The best available evidence tells us that gradually returning to activity is very important to recovery. A gradual return to activities, as long as it does not make symptoms worse, is the best approach. Start with half-days or part time attendance. Identify accommodations that will make the person most successful. Always monitor the injured person carefully, allow rest breaks, and look for signs that they are not doing well or feeling stressed.

What is Post-Concussive Syndrome?

Post-concussion syndrome is a complex disorder in which various symptoms — such as headaches and dizziness — last for weeks and sometimes months after the injury that caused the concussion. This term is often used as a “catch all” when symptoms persist. This term has been described as not helpful to patients. The Ontario Guidelines (2015) for persisting symptoms recommends careful and thorough differential diagnoses of chronic pain, depression, anxiety disorders or other medical/psychiatric issues. The specialist should be reviewing medications and treatments and treat the symptom individually.

What is Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE)?

CTE is a progressive degenerative disease, it was first associated with professional athletes, such as boxers and football players, who experienced repeated blows to the head. The symptoms have life-changing effects for both the individual and for his or her family. Some of the most common symptoms include loss of memory, difficulty controlling impulsive or erratic behavior, impaired judgment, behavioral disturbances (including aggression and depression), difficulty with balance, and a gradual onset of dementia. Right now, CTE can only be confirmed by examining the brain after death. An individual with CTE may be misdiagnosed as having Alzheimer's, Parkinson's disease, or Dementia

Where can I get help? Brain Injury Association of Virginia

1.800.444.6443 - Connect to information and resources via telephone or Chat www.biv.net



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