



What you should know about concussions

Any kind of concussion – mild or severe - can have serious consequences if it isn't properly cared for. In the past, a head injury was not called a concussion unless there was loss of consciousness. Today, any head injury that causes confusion or dizziness for even a few minutes is considered a concussion.

More than 1.5 million people in this country suffer concussions or brain injuries each year, with the most common causes being motor vehicle accidents, violence and falls. Sports and recreation account for about 300,000 brain injuries a year.

► ***What are the symptoms a of concussion?***

Headache, dizziness, confusion, and nausea or vomiting are early symptoms. Longer- lasting ones include headache, lightheadedness, fatigue, irritability, trouble concentrating or remembering, blurred vision, being sensitive to light or sounds, ringing in the ears, and feeling depressed or sad.

► ***Aren't there different kinds of concussions?***

A grade 1 or mild concussion is a head injury that causes brief confusion or dizziness that is gone within 15 minutes. In a grade 2 or moderate concussion, the confusion or dizziness lasts longer than 15 minutes. A head injury with any loss of consciousness, even for a few seconds, is a grade 3 or severe concussion.

► ***When can an athlete play again?***

It depends entirely on how serious the concussion was – and when a doctor or trainer thinks it is safe to play. In general, someone with a grade 1 concussion can go back into the game after the symptoms have cleared. Someone with a grade 2 concussion shouldn't go back into the game but could play in the next week or two (1 week after all symptoms have gone). Someone who has lost consciousness should not return for at least a month, providing that all symptoms have been gone for at least 1 week.

► ***Why do they have to stay out so long?***

The greatest worry about having an athlete go back into a game too soon is something called *Second Impact Syndrome*. This is a second injury to the brain before the first injury has healed completely. It can cause brain swelling and death. The second injury doesn't even have to be very severe.



► ***Are there danger signs to look out for?***

Yes. In rare cases, bleeding can develop in the brain after a head injury. Symptoms include a bad headache that keeps getting worse; increasing weakness, numbness, or loss of coordination; repeated vomiting; slurred speech; and growing confusion or agitation. Call your doctor or emergency department immediately if these symptoms develop.

► ***How is concussion treated?***

Rest is the main treatment for concussion. It's also important to avoid doing anything that might cause another blow to the head. You should not drink alcohol or take aspirin after a concussion, but it's usually all right to use acetaminophen (Tylenol).®

► ***Can concussion be prevented?***

To an extent. Wearing helmets and other protective gear is important. Mouth guards help to lessen the impact on the brain if the player is hit on the chin or jaw. Improved conditioning, especially of the neck, may also be helpful. If you have further questions, contact your health care provider.

Head Injury Hotline
212 Pioneer Building
Seattle, WA 98104 206-621-8558
<http://www.headinjury.com/sports.htm>

National Center for Injury Prevention & Control
Mailstop F41 4770 Buford Highway NE
Atlanta, GA 30341 770-488-4031
www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi
(Fact Sheet on Concussion and Brain Injury)

