



Banner Health

Sterling Regional®
MedCenter

What is a Concussion?

A concussion is a disturbance in the brain function that occurs following a blow to the head or as a result of the violent shaking of the head, which may or may not include loss of consciousness. Concussions don't just happen during sports. They may also happen due to accidents outside of the field or gym.

Common Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion*

Signs observed

- Appears to be dazed or stunned
- Confused about surroundings, place, and time
- Unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even for short time)
- Shows abnormal behavior or personality change
- Forgets events prior to hit
- Forgets events after hit

Symptoms reported by athlete

- Headache
- Nausea
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double, blurred, or fuzzy vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish
- Feeling "foggy"
- Change in sleep pattern (more or less)
- Concentration or memory problems
- Fatigue
- Feeling irritable, sad, nervous or more emotional

*Every athlete is different. These are some of the more common signs and symptoms of concussions.

Concussion Treatment

The goal is to allow the brain injury to heal. Treatment of concussions differ depending on the severity. Concussion treatment includes:

- **Rest.** Provide adequate time for recovery from a concussion. Do not rush back into daily activities for work or school.
- **Preventing re-injury.** Avoid activities that might jolt or jar your head. Never return to sports activity until your provider has given you clearance. Ask when it's safe to drive a car, ride a bike, work or play at heights, or use heavy equipment.
- **Limiting exposure to drugs/supplements.** Do not take medicine without your provider's permission. This is especially true with aspirin, blood thinners, sedating pain killers, and other drugs that cause drowsiness. Avoid the use of alcohol, illicit drugs, or supplements.

The priority of concussion treatment is to get the athlete back to school, prior to any athletic activity.

Safe Initial Treatments

- Sleep
- Tylenol/Motrin/etc
- Ice packs/heat packs for comfort
- Hydration/Proteins/Wholesome carbs
- Limiting screen time

NOT Needed

- Waking them up through the night
- Checking eyes with light

Concussion Recovery

Athletes who are not fully recovered from an initial concussion are vulnerable for recurrent, cumulative, and even catastrophic consequences of a second concussion, which could result in disability or death.

Difficulties are prevented if the athlete is allowed time to recover from a concussion and return to play decisions are carefully made. **No athlete should return to sport or other at-risk activities when symptoms of a concussion are present**, and recovery is ongoing. The best way to prevent further issues are to manage the injury and symptoms properly as they occur. Delayed treatment may also inhibit proper recovery.

Most of athletes who experience a concussion are likely to recover. Some may experience longstanding difficulties related to repeat injuries. Possible long-term consequences of concussions:

- Fatigue
- Ongoing headaches
- Sleep difficulties
- Personality changes (e.g. increased irritability, emotionality)
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Dizziness
- Deficits in short-term memory, problem solving and general academic functioning

This collection of symptoms is called “**Post-Concussion Syndrome.**” In some cases, such difficulties can be permanent or disabling. Suffering a second blow to the head while recovering from an initial concussion can have catastrophic consequences, called “**Second Impact Syndrome,**” which has led to multiple deaths. Roughly 10% of all people who get Second Impact Syndrome will pass away due to complications.

When to seek Immediate Medical Attention:

Contact your primary care provider, call 911, or go directly to the Emergency Room right away if any of the following danger signs occur after a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body:

- Headache that gets worse and does not go away.
- Weakness, numbness or decreased coordination.
- Slurred speech.
- Cannot recognize people/places or have unusual behaviors.

Go to an emergency department right away if:

- Look very drowsy or cannot be awakened/loss or changing consciousness.
- Repeated vomiting or nausea.
- Have one pupil (the black part in the middle of the eye) larger than the other.
- Have convulsions or seizures.
- Are getting more and more confused, restless or agitated.