

A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury (TBI) that may or may not involve a loss of consciousness. Concussions are caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. Most people will recover from a concussion in 7-10 days; however, recovery can last several months or even years. Unfortunately, once an athlete sustains a concussion, he or she is at greater risk of sustaining another. Repeat concussions have long-term consequences, so prevention is essential.

Signs to watch for after an injury

(May take up to 72 hours after the initial injury to present)

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- Inability to recall prior events
- Appears dazed or stunned
- Moves clumsily
- Slow to speak or answer questions
- Loss of consciousness (even briefly)
- Mood, behavior, or personality changes

Symptoms of a concussion

- Headache/pressure in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Weakness/numbness in arms or legs
- Dizziness or blurry vision
- Balance problems
 - Light or noise sensitivity
 - Feeling slowed down or in a haze
 - Confusion, difficulty concentrating
 - Increased irritability

What to do before you see the doctor

- Watch for worsening signs and symptoms and know the red flags (see below)
- Avoid pain medications (including ibuprofen and Tylenol) to appropriately monitor symptoms. If you feel over-the-counter pain medications are necessary for symptom relief, talk to your doctor.
- Limit activities that involve significant concentration and attention.
- Limit screen use (including TV watching, cell phone use, and computer use) to one hour a day.
- Academic work: talk to your athletic trainer and school counselor/teachers to develop a plan for appropriate work load.
- Try to sleep 8-10 hours each night No strenuous physical activity (anything that increases your heart rate or causes shortness of breath) for the first 48 hours.
- Eat a well-balanced diet. Avoid packaged foods, fried foods, sweets, and carbonated drinks.
- Stay hydrated and eat frequently (every 3-4 hours). DON'T skip meals

Red flags

If observed, go to nearest emergency room or (for athletic trainers) notify EMS

- Can't be awakened
- Convulsions, seizures, or repeated vomiting
- Slurred speech
- Increased confusion
- Inability to recognize people or places