

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CONCUSSIONS

When people hear about concussions, most think of the professional hockey player who has had his career impacted by these head injuries. You don't have to be an athlete to have a concussion.

- More than 155,000 Canadians suffered concussions in 2014
- More than 50% of child and youth injuries in emergency departments are sports and recreation-related, with concussions being among the most common



### What Do You Do if You Have a Concussion?

The signs and symptoms of a concussion often last for 7 to 10 days, but may last longer. There is no cure for a concussion. The most important treatment for a concussion is rest.

A concussed person should take a break from any activities that can cause the symptoms to get worse. This can include avoiding the following activities:

- Riding a bike
- Reading
- School or work
- Working on the computer
- Playing video games

If a person doesn't rest, the symptoms can last longer and become more severe.

### Listen to Your Doctor and Take Slow Steps to Return to Normal

Everyone with a concussion should see their doctor for a concussion treatment plan. When a person with a concussion starts to improve and has no symptoms, they can slowly start to become more active both mentally and physically.

Returning to normal is more like a 'dimmer switch' for lights versus an 'on-off switch'. The brightness is turned up very slowly, and turned down if there is a return of symptoms. This stepwise approach has been shown to safely help a person get back to their normal self.

### When Can a Person With a Concussion Return to Sport?

A person with a concussion should only return to sports and activities when they have no symptoms. They will normally start with some walking, light jogging and practice before returning to regular game play. Your doctor will provide recommendations on how to slowly and safely return to sports.

### Where Can I Find More? Concussion Information:

1. Parachute Canada  
<http://www.parachutecanada.org/concussion>  
*Parachute Canada also has the Concussion Ed app that is available for free from the Apple app or Google play stores*
2. Holland Bloorview Hospital Concussion & You Handbook  
<http://hollandbloorview.ca/programsandservices/Concussioncentre/Concussioneducation/Handbook>
3. Center for Disease Control (United States)  
HEADS UP to Parents  
<https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/parents/index.html>

## What is a Concussion?

A concussion is a mild brain injury caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head. Concussions can also happen when you fall or have a blow to the body that causes the head to quickly move back and forth. These all cause the brain to move and bump inside the skull. If it moves hard enough, the brain can become injured.

## What Are the Most Common Causes of Concussion?

A concussion can happen anywhere. The most common causes of concussions are:

- Falls
- Motor vehicle-related injuries
- Assaults
- Playing sports
- Unintentionally being struck by or against an object

## Six Things You Should Know About Concussions

1. A concussion is a brain injury
2. You can have a concussion without losing consciousness
3. Concussions symptoms are more than just physical; they can affect you mentally and emotionally
4. Most people with concussions improve quickly; up to 30% of people have symptoms that last up to 4 weeks
5. If you have a concussion, it is very important to rest your mind and body
6. A person with a concussion can look perfectly normal but may still feel the effects of the brain injury

## What Are the Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion?

Concussions can affect a person in a variety of ways. The brain is responsible for the way we think and feel, so it is very common for people with a concussion to also have mental, memory, and sleep problems.



### Physical Symptoms

- Headaches
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Poor coordination or balance
- Sensitive to light and noise



### Mental

- Fogginess and difficulty thinking
- Feeling slowed down
- Difficulty concentrating and remembering
- Easily Distracted



### Sleep

- Difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep
- Sleeping more or less than usual



### Emotional and Behavioural

- Irritable
- Nervous/anxious
- Frustration
- Anger
- Sadness

## What Should You Do if Someone May Have a Concussion?

It is important to remember that not all head injuries are concussions. Only properly trained people should evaluate an injured person.

### When to Call an Ambulance

If a person has a potentially serious head or neck injury, they should not be moved, and an ambulance should be called. If a person is having severe symptoms (seizures, breathing problems, weakness or tingly in the arms or legs), they should be taken by ambulance to the nearest hospital.

**Warning:** It's always better safe than sorry. If there are no trained or qualified people to help evaluate an injured person, call an ambulance to get appropriate care.

### The Key is to Recognize and Remove any Person with a Suspected Concussion

Even a minor hit or injury can cause a concussion. Anyone that may have a concussion should not be allowed to return to an activity until they are properly evaluated. Any of the following signs could mean a person has a concussion.

#### 1. Check for visible clues of a concussion

- Loss of consciousness / Not responsive
- Lying motionless on ground / Slow to get up
- Unsteady on feet / Balance problems or falling over / Lack of coordination
- Grabbing / Clutching of head
- Dazed, blank or vacant look
- Confused / Not aware of plays or events

#### 2. Check for signs and symptoms of a concussion (one or more of the following)

- Loss of consciousness
- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- "Pressure in head"
- Irritability
- Amnesia
- Nervous or anxious
- Sensitivity to noise
- Headache
- Balance problems
- Feeling slowed down
- More emotional
- Sensitivity to light
- Fatigue or low energy
- Neck Pain
- Difficulty remembering
- Seizure or convulsion
- Confusion
- Drowsiness
- Blurred vision
- Sadness
- Feeling like "in a fog"
- "Don't feel right"
- Difficulty concentrating

#### 3. Check for Memory Problems

(failure of any of the following questions may suggest a concussion)

- "What venue are we at today?"
- "Which half/period is it now?"
- "Who scored last in this game?"
- "What team did you play last week/game?"
- "Did your team win the last game?"

Any athlete with a suspected concussion should be IMMEDIATELY REMOVED FROM PLAY, and should not be returned to activity until they are evaluated by a doctor. Athletes with a suspected concussion should not be left alone and should not drive a motor vehicle because the symptoms may get worse.