

CONCUSSIONS

What Is a Concussion?

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury caused by a hit or jolt to the head or body that causes the head that can cause the brain to impact the inside of the skull that effects the way the brain functions.

If you suspect a concussion, always have the young person seek medical attention. You should never attempt to treat a concussion without a physician's involvement.

Symptoms and Signs of a Concussion

Often, the symptoms and signs of a concussion show up hours after the incident or even the next day, so make sure after any blow to the head or body that young people are observed for changes in healthy or behaviour.

It's important to note that a young person suffering from a concussion may show any one or more of these symptoms or signs:

<i>Symptoms</i>	<i>Signs</i>
• Headache	• Poor balance or coordination
• Dizziness	• Slow or slurred speech
• Feeling dazed	• Poor concentration
• Seeing stars	• Delayed responses to questions
• Sensitivity to light	• Vacant Stare
• Ringing in ears	• Unusual emotions, personality changes or inappropriate behaviour
• Fatigue	
• Nausea or vomiting	
• Irritability	
• Confusion or disorientation	

If, after an injury, the young person loses consciousness, call an ambulance immediately!

Key Steps in Dealing with a Concussion

- Remove the young person from the activity
- Do **not** leave the young person alone, and always monitor their symptoms and signs
- Do **not** give the young person any medication
- Inform the parent or guardian as soon as possible
- Get the young person to a doctor as soon as possible

Do **not** allow the young person to rejoin a game or activity

6 Steps to Return to Play

A concussion is a serious injury that requires a gradual reintroduction to activities monitored and with permission by a physician. Symptoms and signs can return at any time during this process. If they do, the young person must be re-evaluated by a physician. Remember that symptoms and signs can return later in the day or the next day after an injury.

Step 1: Complete physical and mental rest! Which includes reading, computers, or watching television. The mind needs time to heal.

Step 2: Easy light introduction to physical activity like walking or riding a stationary bike, but monitor the young person for any symptoms or signs.

Step 3: The young person can start to do easy activity related games or training, like skating or stretching.

Step 4: Allow the young person to rejoin the activity without any rough activities or body contact. You can move to Step 5 once the young person's doctor provides medical clearance.

Step 5: Begin games or drills including body contact if that is part of the activity or sport.

Step 6: The young person can resume the activity entirely.

These six steps should take, at the shortest, a week, but if any symptoms or signs of a concussion occur, you must return to Step 1 and have the young person re-evaluated by a doctor.

A young person must never return to their activity if symptoms persist!

How Can I Help Keep Young People Safe?

- Help create a culture of safety in your activity.
- Talk with other activity leaders about ways in which you can reduce situations where a young person might sustain a concussion.
- Talk with the young people you lead about concussion and ask if they have concerns about reporting an injury. Talk with them about their concerns and emphasize the importance of reporting concussions and taking time to recover from one.
- Ensure that all young people follow safety rules and rules specific to the activity.
- Model good sportsmanship and tell the young people you lead that you expect them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- When appropriate, make sure young people have properly fitting and certified equipment and helmets. Remember, helmets cannot prevent concussions, so hits to the head must be avoided.

Final Note

Concussion is a serious, traumatic head injury. Young people who continue to play or return to activities before fully healed have a greater chance of getting another concussion. Getting another concussion while the brain is still healing from the first injury can be very serious and can affect a young person for the rest of their life. Treat concussions with caution and care, and always follow the 6 Steps to Return to Play.

To learn more about concussions, go to www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP or www.parachutecanada.org