

# WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

**A CONCUSSION IS A BRAIN INJURY** caused by a blow or jolt to the head, or to another part of the body with force transmitted to the head. Although most concussions are mild, **all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications, including brain damage and death, if not recognized and managed properly.** In other words, even a “ding” or bump to the head can be serious.

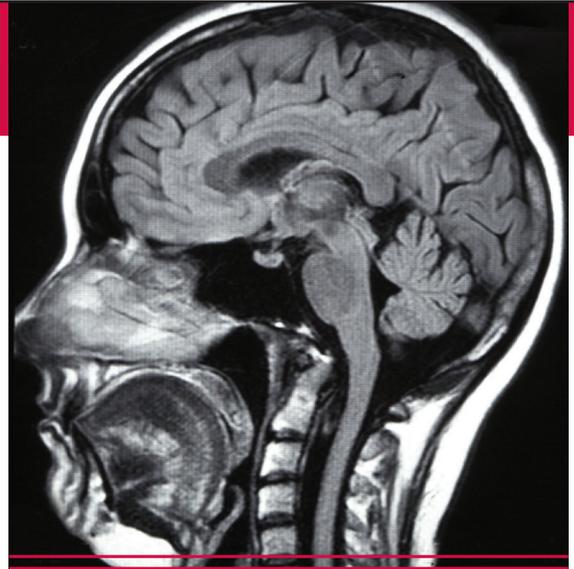
## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

You can't physically see a concussion, and most occur without loss of consciousness. Signs and symptoms may show up right after the injury or can take hours or days to fully appear. If someone you know reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms or signs of a concussion yourself, seek medical attention right away.

## SIGNS

Teammates, parents and coaches should look out for:

- Vacant facial expression
- Confused about assignment
- Appears dazed
- Forgets plays
- Is unsure of game, score or opponent
- Moves clumsily or displays uncoordinated behavior
- Answers questions slowly
- Slurred speech
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Can't recall events before or after hit
- Seizures or convulsions
- Loses consciousness



NEUROLOGISTS SAY ONCE A PERSON SUFFERS A CONCUSSION, HE IS AS MUCH AS FOUR TIMES MORE LIKELY TO SUSTAIN A SECOND ONE.

## SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of a concussion may include:

- Headaches
- A feeling of pressure in the head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Neck pain
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Blurred, double or fuzzy vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish or slowed down
- Feeling foggy or groggy
- Drowsiness
- Change in sleep pattern
- Amnesia
- “Don't feel right”
- Fatigue or low energy
- Sadness
- Nervousness or anxiety
- Irritability
- More emotional
- Confusion
- Concentration or memory problems (forgetting game plays)
- Repeating the same question/comment

## What should I do if I suspect an athlete has a concussion?

If an athlete is suspected of suffering a concussion, he or she should be removed from the game or practice **immediately**. No athlete with an apparent head injury (regardless of how mild it seems) may return to activity without approval of a physician or certified athletic trainer. The athlete's condition should continue to be monitored for several hours.

**IHSA POLICY** requires athletes to provide the school with **written** clearance from a physician\* or a certified athletic trainer working with a physician before returning to play after being removed from an interscholastic contest due to a possible head injury or concussion. When in doubt, the athlete sits out.

*\*This refers only to a physician licensed to practice medicine in all its branches.*

If at any time the athlete experiences concussive symptoms, he or she must rest until they are 100 percent symptom-free. Then he or she can resume the step completed prior to symptoms and complete all steps in succession before returning to play.

### GENERAL RETURN-TO-PLAY GUIDELINES

**Step 1:** Once the athlete is no longer experiencing concussive symptoms for at least 24 hours, a SCAT2 test should be performed by the team athletic trainer or physician.

**Step 2:** If the athlete passes the SCAT2 test, he or she can perform light cardiovascular activity such as stationary bike that day for 20 minutes.

**Step 3:** If the athlete does not experience concussive symptoms with light cardiovascular activity, then he or she can perform more strenuous cardiovascular activity such as jogging, running or elliptical trainer for 20 minutes the following day.

**Step 4:** If the athlete does not experience concussive symptoms with the more strenuous cardiovascular activity, he or she can perform non-contact, sport-specific drills the next day.

**Step 5:** If the athlete completes the non-contact drills without experiencing concussive symptoms, then the athlete is released to participate in practice.

### WHAT CAN HAPPEN IF AN ATHLETE PLAYS WITH A CONCUSSION, OR RETURNS TO PLAY TOO SOON?

Continuing to play with the signs and symptoms of a concussion leaves a young athlete vulnerable to more severe and lasting injuries. The athlete is at increased risk of **significant damage** for a period of time after the concussion occurs, particularly if he or she suffers another concussion before completely recovering from the first. This can lead to prolonged recovery or severe brain swelling (second impact syndrome) with devastating and even fatal consequences.

Adolescents or teens will often fail to report symptoms of injuries, which is why educating administrators, coaches, parents and students is the key to student athlete safety.



AFTER SEVERAL CONCUSSIONS, IT TAKES LESS OF A BLOW TO CAUSE THE INJURY AND REQUIRES MORE TIME TO RECOVER.

