

## CONCUSSION RED FLAGS

*For the FIRST 24 TO 72 HOURS the concussed person should NOT be left alone and should be watched for Red Flag signs or symptoms. In rare cases, a dangerous blood clot may form on the brain in a person with a concussion and crowd the brain against the skull.*

**Go to the emergency room if any of these RED FLAGS are noticed:**

- Increasing confusion or irritability.
- Vomiting or nausea.
- Seizures or convulsions.
- Weakness or tingling/burning in arms or legs, or decreased coordination.
- Deteriorating consciousness (is drowsy or cannot be awakened).
- Severe or increasing headache.
- Unusual behavior changes.
- Double vision.
- One pupil larger than the other.
- Slurred speech.
- Cannot recognize people or places.
- Loses consciousness (even a brief loss should be taken seriously).

## CONCUSSION CARE AND RECOVERY INFORMATION

### *What is a concussion?*

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that changes the way the brain normally works. A concussion is caused by a bump, blow, or jolts to the head or body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. Even a mild bump to the head can be serious. The damage to the brain occurs at a chemical level and normal brain cell function is disrupted. Diagnostic imaging studies (CT and MRI) are typically normal after a concussion. **The concussed person should see a medical provider within 72 hours of the injury.**

### *What are the signs and symptoms of a concussion?*

Signs and symptoms of a concussion can show up right after injury or may not appear or be noticed for up to 3 days after the injury. Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness.

### **Symptoms of concussion include:**

#### **THINKING**

- Disorientation and feeling confused — feeling slowed down or in a fog
- Memory loss
- Difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly
- Difficulty retaining new information

#### **PHYSICAL**

- Prolonged headache
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Vision disturbances
- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Impaired balance (this is often the first symptom to recover)

#### **EMOTIONAL**

- Irritability
- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Personality changes
- Behavioral changes
- Depression
- Lack of motivation

#### **SLEEP/ENERGY**

- Fatigue
- Excess sleep
- Trouble falling asleep
- Drowsiness
- Sleeping less than usual
- Altered sleep patterns

## What should you do if you think your athlete has a concussion?

If you suspect that an athlete has a concussion, remove the athlete from play and seek medical attention. Do NOT try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and until a qualified and concussion trained health care professional says it is okay to return to play. It is better to miss one game than the whole season.

## Why should someone report their symptoms?

If a person has a concussion, his/her brain needs time to heal. While the brain is still healing, he/she is much more likely to have another concussion. Repeat concussions can increase the time it takes to recover. In rare cases, repeat concussions in young people who have not recovered from a prior concussion can result in brain swelling or permanent damage to their brain. They can even be fatal.

## Recovery

Each concussion is unique. The key to recovery is 48 hours of rest followed by a gradual increase in brain and body activity but only if the increased activity does not make the symptoms come back.

Exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration, such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games, may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse. Light activity, such as a short walk, is okay. After a concussion, returning to athletic activity and work/school is a gradual process that should be carefully managed and monitored by a healthcare professional.

## Remember

- Concussions affect people differently. While most athletes with a concussion recover quickly and fully, some will have symptoms that last for days, or even weeks. A more serious concussion can last for months or longer.
- People with one or more previous concussions are at increased risk for more concussions.
- Young children, teens, and the elderly may take longer to recover.

**For more information and listing of concussion-trained clinicians, go to [logan.org/savethebrain](http://logan.org/savethebrain) or call the Concussion Clinic at (406) 758-7035.**

*Adapted from Centers for Disease Control at [cdd.gov/headsup](http://cdd.gov/headsup)*

## IN CASE OF CONCUSSION,

- Take Tylenol for headaches
- Ice the head/neck
- Eat a light diet
- Rest and sleep for the first 48-72 hours
- Do not drive for at least 24 hours
- Allow for sleep (physical and mental rest)
- Keep environment quiet and low light
- Avoid
  - Alcohol
  - Being alone
  - Physical exertion
  - Loud music, machinery, activities

**By Montana Law a concussed athlete may NOT Return to Play until cleared by a qualified health care provider.**

**Return to Play Protocol can be found at [logan.org/savethebrain](http://logan.org/savethebrain).**