

CONCUSSION RED FLAGS

Do not send a concussed patient home by themselves, they need to be with a responsible adult and **NOT ALONE FOR THE FIRST 3 HOURS**. For the **FIRST 24 TO 72 HOURS** the concussed person should be monitored 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 jolt 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 injury affects the brain at a chemical level, disrupting normal brain cell function. Diagnostic imaging studies (CT and MRI) are typically normal after a concussion.

Anyone with a suspected concussion should be evaluated by a medical provider within 72 hours of the injury. After discharge from the hospital or emergency department, a follow-up evaluation with a primary care provider or concussion clinic should occur within 7 days.

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 / COGNITIVE - Disorientation or confusion - 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 (often the first symptom to recover)

EMOTIONAL / BEHAVIORAL - 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

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.

What to Do If a Concussion Is Suspected

If a concussion is suspected, **do not attempt to judge the severity.** Remove the individual from activity and seek medical attention. Rest and close monitoring are critical during the early recovery period.

Recovery

Each concussion is unique. Recovery requires a **gradual and monitored return** to brain and body activity, as long as symptoms are not more than mildly worsened.

- Take frequent breaks
- Limit activity to low-impact cardiovascular exercise
- Avoid full-contact activity
- Activities requiring concentration (studying, computer use, video games) may worsen symptoms
- Light activity, such as a short walk, is acceptable if symptoms remain mild

Return to work, school, and athletic activity should be **gradual and supervised by a healthcare professional.**

Important Reminders

- Concussions affect people differently
- Symptoms may last days, weeks, or longer
- Individuals with previous concussions are at higher risk for future concussions
- Young children, teens, and older adults may take longer to Recover

Youth Athletes (18 Years or Younger) vs. Adults / Non-Athletes

Youth Athletes (18 or Younger):

- By Montana state law, any athlete age 18 or younger with a suspected concussion **MUST** be immediately removed from play
- The athlete may **NOT** return to play the same day
- Return to play is prohibited until cleared by a qualified health care provider trained in concussion management
- Strict adherence to a graduated return-to-play protocol is required.
- This law is intended to protect the developing brain and prevent serious or fatal complications

Adults and Non-Athletes:

- Should immediately stop the activity that caused the injury
- Seek medical evaluation as soon as possible
- Gradual return to work, exercise, and daily activities should be guided by symptoms and medical advice
- Clearance is required before resuming high-risk or strenuous Activities

Follow up recommendations for expedited recovery from your concussion is:

- Follow up with a Logan Health Concussion Program provider , call (406) 758-7035 and press Option 5 or your primary care physician within 1 week.
- Student athletes – follow up with the athletic trainer at your school. If your school does not have one, please call (406) 871-8433

IN CASE OF CONCUSSION,

- **Take Tylenol for headaches**
- **Ice the head/neck**
- **Eat a light diet**
- **Take 5-10-minute breaks from activity every 30-40 minutes**
- **Do not drive until cleared by a healthcare professional**
- **Allow for sleep (physical and mental rest)**
- **Keep environment quiet and low light**
- **Avoid**
 - **Alcohol or drugs not prescribed by healthcare provider**
 - **Being alone**
 - **Physical exertion**
 - **Loud music, machinery, activities**

By Montana Law a concussed youth 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.