



Concussion

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that makes the brain move quickly inside the skull. This movement can stretch or irritate brain cells and cause chemical changes that temporarily affect how the brain functions.

When should I be suspicious of a concussion?

If your child/teen **sustains a hard hit to the head** (or to the body which causes the head to move back and forth suddenly) **and experiences ANY symptoms** in addition to soreness at the site of the hit (even minor and short lived symptoms), **this could be a concussion**. Symptoms can affect thinking, emotions, balance, and sleep. They most commonly report symptoms such as feeling monetarily “dazed or stunned,” having a brief vision change such as “seeing spots” or “vision getting blurry,” feeling off balance or dizzy, having a headache (in addition to head being sore at the site). Additionally, lots of other symptoms are possible and could include emotional changes, sleepiness, light or noise sensitivity, and trouble with concentration or memory. Most children or teens with mild traumatic brain injuries (concussion) do not have loss of consciousness.

If your child has any symptoms after a hard hit, stop activity and have them evaluated. Most concussions do not involve loss of consciousness—even a “ding” or “bell ringer” can be a concussion.

What symptoms should lead me to go to the ER?

Some symptoms appear right away, while others may not surface for hours or days—often only becoming noticeable when returning to normal routines. If any of these symptoms were to occur, urgent evaluation is needed:

- headache that worsens and worsens and nothing makes it better
- repeated vomiting
- increased confusion or agitation
- slurred speech
- stumbling/staggering/unable to balance
- numbness
- more and more drowsy/difficult to awaken
- unable to see well out of eye(s)
- seizure
- loss of consciousness

When should I be seen in the office if an ER visit isn't needed?

Initially, for high school athletes in contact-sports, school athletic trainers can offer useful recommendations. Typically, within 1-3 days of the injury it's useful to be evaluated either by your PCP or by SportsSafe Concussion Clinic for formal diagnosis, treatment plan, and academic and athletic accommodation plan.

What guidelines should I follow while waiting for my appointment?

Recovery takes time and balance. Both rest and gradual reintroduction of normal activities are important. Over-resting can slow recovery, while returning too soon can worsen symptoms or risk re-injury. SportsSafe providers will help you determine the right balance.

Do:

- Take breaks and rest when tired.
- Limit screen time, reading, and mentally demanding tasks that worsen symptoms.
- It's okay to try non-stressful activities such drawing, art, puzzles, Legos, audiobooks, short periods of reading, etc.
- Eat regularly and stay hydrated.
- Keep up sleep routine; short naps are fine if needed. Try to go to bed earlier, if able.

Don't Do:

- Lay in a dark room all day; complete bed rest is not recommended.
- Strenuous exercise, contact exercise, or any activity with risk of head impact. After 1-2 days when symptoms are improved, light exercise (like going for a walk) is recommended.
- Strenuous cognitive activity or screen use which greatly worsens symptoms.

Strict rest beyond 48 hours can delay recovery. Begin a gradual return to school and light activity as symptoms allow. Follow this guide for all activity: If the activity keeps concussion symptoms at a score of 0-4 out of 10, it's okay to keep doing that activity. If the activity elevates any symptom to a >5/10, stop the activity and take a break until the symptom score lowers.

School Progression Guide

- Return to school when able to tolerate 30–45 minutes of concentration and manage light visual/auditory stimulation.
- If schoolwork keeps symptoms $\leq 4/10$, continue. If symptoms rise $> 5/10$, stop and take a break.
- Early return to school (within 1–2 days) may help recovery.
- For screen sensitivity, use nightshift or low-brightness mode, print assignments or have them read aloud, try tinted overlays to reduce eye strain ("colored overlays for reading" on Amazon).
- Start with partial school day with rest breaks and reduced workload, progressing to full school days with reduction in accommodations as able. School notes will offer specific recommendations.

How will I know the concussion is resolved?

Our SportsSafe Concussion Clinic will guide you through all recovery steps. To assure full healing, SportsSafe monitors neurologic function, balance, eye tracking and coordination, cognitive performance (via testing), concussion symptoms, and a return to play progression.

How do I schedule with SportsSafe?

Call 512-814-1616 and leave a voicemail and one of our schedulers will return your call to schedule.