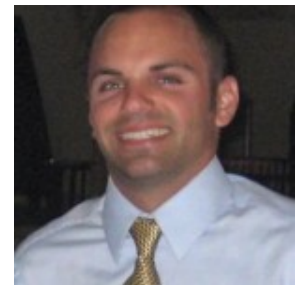


# Critical to take concussions seriously

By Kris Terrian

With fall and winter sport seasons upon us, concussion awareness is a timely topic. But concussions are not only a sports-related injury. A concussion can occur from a fall on the head, whiplash in a car accident, or other significant



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impacts to the head or body.

A concussion, a type of traumatic brain injury, is a disturbance in brain function that occurs after an impact to the head or body causes the brain to move or violently shake.

If you or someone you know experiences a direct or indirect impact to the head or neck, consider some signs and symptoms of a concussion:

- Headache or pressure against the head
- Temporary loss of consciousness
- Confusion or “foggy” feeling
- Amnesia surrounding the incident
- Dizziness, “seeing stars”
- Ringing in the ears
- Nausea, vomiting
- Slurred speech, delayed response to questions

- Fatigue.

Someone who experiences significant head or body impact should be safely removed from the cause of the injury, such as participation in a sport. Some symptoms of concussions may be delayed hours or days after an injury. New research from Boston Children's Hospital suggests emotional and mental concussion symptoms last longer in children.

One of the most dangerous injuries from a concussion is second impact syndrome or SIS. SIS can happen when a second concussion or head injury occurs before the first concussion injury has recovered. Recovery can take weeks and an additional concussion during the recovery period can be fatal.

Anyone who experiences a traumatic head trauma or severe signs of a concussion should seek medical attention. Concussion patients, especially injured athletes and adventure enthusiasts, should be cleared by a physician before heading back out to play.

If the signs and symptoms discussed above increase or do not go away, see a medical provider right away. Other concerning signs and symptoms that require immediate medical attention include:

- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Extreme drowsiness, concussion patient won't wake up
- One pupil larger than the other
- Convulsions or seizures
- Difficulty recognizing people or places
- Loss of consciousness
- Increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation

To avoid a concussion, exercise caution, prevention and knowledge. In activities with substantial contact or potential for falls, wear a helmet. In organized sports, limit contact with the head or objects that could strike the head. Coaches should teach proper mechanics for falling or colliding, such

as safe approaches to tackling in football.

Be aware of your surroundings and play with caution. Note the concussion symptoms listed above and take appropriate action if a significant head or body impact occurs.

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