

BSA SAFETY MOMENT

CONCUSSIONS

SUMMARY

A concussion, also known as a traumatic brain injury (TBI), is an injury that results from a blow to the head causing an alteration of brain function. Concussions may also be due to falls or blows to the body that cause the brain to move quickly back and forth.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Concussions are difficult to diagnose and are often called “invisible injuries.” It is important to note that in 90 percent of all youth-related concussions, there is no loss of consciousness. Most people with concussions recover quickly and fully, but for some the symptoms can last for days, weeks, or longer. Recovery may be slower among young children and teenagers. Those who have had a concussion in the past are at greater risk for another one, and recovery may take longer the second time.

Signs and symptoms of a concussion injury may include

- Headache (the most common symptom)
- Confusion
- Forgetfulness
- Dizziness
- Loss of balance or coordination
- Nausea/vomiting
- Blurry or double vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Sleepiness or lethargy
- Personality changes
- Loss of consciousness, brief or prolonged
(Note: This does not occur with all concussions.)

TREATMENT

Rest in a quiet, darkened area, such as a tent away from activities. Adult leaders should monitor the patient for any change in symptoms. Keep the patient calm and quiet. Allow them to sleep if needed—it is no longer recommended to keep someone with a concussion awake. Limit reading and use of electronics.

If symptoms persist for more than 24 hours or become worse, or if new symptoms appear, the person needs to be evaluated by a physician even if it requires evacuation or removal from an activity. Immediate evacuation should occur if

- The headache becomes worse
- There is repeated vomiting
- The patient suffers a seizure
- Drowsiness increases or the patient can't be awakened
- Speech is slurred
- The patient seems confused or irritable
- There is increased dizziness or imbalance
- The patient feels weakness or numbness in the arms or legs

Anyone with a suspected concussion should be evaluated by a physician.

RESOURCES

- CDC Brain Injury Basics: www.cdc.gov/headsup/basics/index.html
- CDC Heads Up: www.cdc.gov/headsup/pdfs/schools/tbi_factsheets_parents-508-a.pdf
- Nationwide Children's Hospital: www.nationwidechildrens.org/parents-guide-to-concussions