

**DON'T HIDE IT, REPORT IT!  
GET A DOCTOR TO CHECK IT OUT!  
TAKE CARE OF YOUR BRAIN!**

# THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT **CONCUSSIONS**



**WHAT IS IT?** Concussion is a brain injury. Any blow to the head, face, neck or to the body that causes a sudden shaking or jarring of the brain inside the skull may cause a concussion. A concussion can result from any number of activities including receiving a check in hockey, falling from a jungle gym, being in a motor vehicle collision or slipping on an icy sidewalk. You do not need to lose consciousness to have had a concussion.

## **WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?**

### **PHYSICAL**

- headache
- nausea or vomiting
- dizziness
- blurred vision
- fatigue or low energy
- sensitivity to light or noise
- loss of consciousness

### **COGNITIVE (THINKING)**

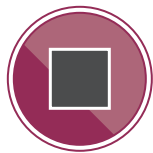
- general confusion or foginess
- difficulty concentrating
- difficulty remembering

### **EMOTIONAL**

- more emotional
- irritability
- sadness
- nervousness or anxiety



Symptoms usually last for seven to 10 days but may last for several weeks to several months in some people.



## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

If you think you have had a concussion, you should **immediately remove yourself from the current activity whether it is sports, work or school.** You should not drive and should seek medical attention. It is important to tell a family member, friend, co-worker, teammate, employer, trainer or coach if you think you have had a concussion.

If you suspect a concussion, remove the person from the sport or other activity right away. They should not be left alone and should be assessed by a medical or health professional as soon as possible. Given that symptoms may worsen later that night or over the next day or two, the injured person should not return to their current activity levels. When concussed, their ability to assess their situation may be impaired.



## WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU SEE A HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL

**Diagnosing a concussion may take several steps.**

Your health care professional may ask questions about previous concussions and your work and sport history, and may perform “neurocognitive” tests to evaluate orientation to time, date and place, memory skills and ability to pay attention or concentrate. A physical examination including assessment of coordination and balance will also be performed. Your doctor may request further tests including a CT scan or MRI if there is any concern about a structural head injury like bleeding in the brain. It is important to remember that concussions cannot be seen on CT or MRI scans.

Your health care professional will send you home with important instructions. Be sure to follow them carefully.



## HOW IS IT TREATED?

**The most important treatment is REST – both physical and mental.** Adults and children should not play sports, exercise or participate in recreational activities such as bike riding. Cognitive, or mental rest, includes limiting activities

that require mental concentration, such as school, reading, texting, watching television, computer work and electronic games.

Be patient because healing takes time. Only when symptoms have reduced significantly, in consultation with your health care professional, should you slowly and gradually return to your daily activities, such as work or school. If your symptoms come back or you get new symptoms as you become more active, this is a sign that you are pushing yourself too hard. Stop these activities and take more time to rest and recover.

### For more information:

Parachute [parachutecanada.org/activeandsafe/](http://parachutecanada.org/activeandsafe/)

Canadian Paediatric Society [www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/sport\\_related\\_concussion](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/sport_related_concussion)

Center for Disease Control and Prevention [www.cdc.gov/concussion/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/index.html)

This information was brought to you by Parachute, the Canadian Academy of Sport and Exercise Medicine (CASEM) and the Canadian Medical Association. All reasonable precautions have been taken by CMA to verify that the information is accurate and up-to-date. It assumes no responsibility or liability arising from any error or omission or from the reader's use of any information in this supplement. The responsibility for the interpretation and use of the information lies with the reader. It is not intended to constitute or replace professional medical advice, but rather to provide readers with information to better understand an important health issue. The CMA urges readers to consult a qualified physician regarding any personal health concerns, questions or diagnosis.



## WHEN CAN I RETURN TO SPORTS?

No one should return to play or vigorous activity while signs or symptoms of a concussion are present.

Return to sport and activity must follow a step-wise approach.

## THE SIX STEPS TO RETURN TO PLAY INCLUDE:

1. No activity, mental and physical rest until symptom-free
2. Light aerobic activity like walking or stationary cycling
3. Sport-specific activity like skating or running
4. Training drills without body contact
5. Training drills with body contact – only once cleared by a physician
6. Game play



Each step in the return-to-play process must take a minimum of one day. If symptoms return during this process, either with activity or later in the day, stop the activity and return to rest until symptoms resolve before trying any activity again. A physician should be consulted if symptoms persist.

**Parachute**  
PREVENTING INJURIES. SAVING LIVES.



**ASSOCIATION  
MÉDICALE  
CANADIENNE**



**CANADIAN  
MEDICAL  
ASSOCIATION**