

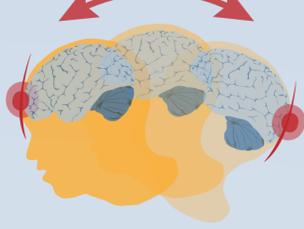
CONCUSSIONS 101

A GUIDE TO THE FIRST WEEK

DO I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

CONCUSSION = BRAIN IMPACT + SYMPTOMS

A bruised brain reveals itself in lots of different ways. We divide these into four general categories: physical, thinking, emotional, and sleeping problems.



Your best policy:

"CHECK YOURSELF BEFORE YOU WRECK YOURSELF."

If you *think* you might have a concussion, you should remove yourself from the physical activity and take it easy.

HOW DO I "CHECK" MYSELF?

See if you have any of these symptoms below. Going forward, you can create a very simple diary to track if your brain and/or physical activity triggers any symptoms.

SYMPTOM	SEVERITY				
	none	mild	moderate	severe	
PHYSICAL	headache	0	1	2	3
	"pressure in head"	0	1	2	3
	neck pain	0	1	2	3
	nausea/vomiting	0	1	2	3
	dizziness	0	1	2	3
	blurred vision	0	1	2	3
	balance problems	0	1	2	3
	sensitivity to light/noise	0	1	2	3
THINKING	fatigue/low energy	0	1	2	3
	feeling slowed down	0	1	2	3
	feeling "in a fog"	0	1	2	3
	"don't feel right"	0	1	2	3
	difficulty concentrating	0	1	2	3
EMOTIONAL	difficulty remembering	0	1	2	3
	confusion	0	1	2	3
	more emotional	0	1	2	3
	irritability	0	1	2	3
SLEEPING	sadness	0	1	2	3
	nervous/anxious	0	1	2	3
	drowsiness	0	1	2	3
	trouble falling asleep	0	1	2	3
TOTAL NUMBER OF SYMPTOMS	SYMPTOM SEVERITY SCORE				
=	=				

(Adapted from the British Journal of Sport Medicine. For the complete evaluation, see the [Sport Concussion Assessment Tool](#).)

Note whether these symptoms worsen when you're working harder, physically or mentally.



Keep in mind, you can still have a concussion even if you...



...didn't get knocked out. Concussions don't always mean loss of consciousness.



...weren't struck directly on the head. Getting hit elsewhere on the body can also shake your head.



...don't have immediate symptoms. Some symptoms take up to 48 hrs to appear.

SHOULD I GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM?

If you feel a **sudden change** in symptoms, **you must go to the ER**. These severe symptoms may indicate a more serious problem like a brain bleed, which unlike a concussion, will show up on ER scans.



SEVERE SYMPTOMS:

- severe headaches/neck pain
- repeated vomiting
- seizure
- slurred speech
- confusion
- unresponsiveness

Keep in mind:

Even if you don't feel a sudden change in symptoms, you may choose to get checked out for reassurance. You can go to your family doc, sports medicine clinic, neurologist, or a concussion clinic to get a baseline assessment, medical documentation (in case you need to miss school/work), and general advice.

WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?

It's hard to know how your concussion will play out. 80-90% of concussion cases resolve within three weeks. Certain factors, such as any previous concussions, a history of headaches, or learning/mental issues can affect recovery time. Learn what you can do to get better.



1 TAKE IT EASY AND MONITOR

- you wouldn't run on a sprained knee – treat your brain the same way
- limit stimulation, increase quiet time
- take a few days off of school/work
- monitor symptoms
- use a diary to track what you do and how it feels

2 GET INFORMED

- start with our Concussions 101 [whiteboard video](#) to learn about cognitive rest, return to learn (or work/life/sports/activity)
- I like this [handout](#) from the Children's National SCORE programme
- for a deeper dive, see the paediatric [evidence-based guidelines](#)

3 FOLLOW UP WITH YOUR TEAM

- all this can take time and be frustrating for you – it's hard to slow down and easy to feel down
- it's hard for others to see concussions – symptoms like being in a fog or feeling anxious can be hard to put one's finger on
- because you don't feel your best but people presume you're okay, you need to be open and upfront about how you feel
- ratchet up your care if you are not improving

If you have any concerns, talk to your doctor!

FOR MORE COOL RESOURCES, CHECK OUT: www.evanshealthlab.com