

# Heads Up: Tips on Concussion



## WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion can occur when a bump, blow or jolt to the head - or even a hit to the body - makes a person's head move rapidly back and forth, causing the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull. This creates chemical changes in the brain and sometimes stretches and damages brain cells.

The effects of a concussion can be serious. Concussions can also lead to "second-impact syndrome" or "post-concussion syndrome."



## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU SUSPECT YOU HAVE A CONCUSSION?

- If you think you or someone around you may have had a concussion, STOP what you're doing right away. Look for symptoms or confusion and then if necessary or if you're at all uncertain, seek immediate medical attention.
  - Concussions are not always obvious.
- An injured person sometimes will simply say they just "don't feel right" after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body. Other times, specific symptoms can be seen or self-reported.
- Some symptoms may not appear right away. Continue to check for signs over the next few days. If at any time concussion signs or symptoms get worse – or if you have any doubts, concerns or questions at all – consult with a doctor or go to an emergency department right away.



## OBSERVED SYMPTOMS

- Memory issues
- Appears dazed, confused, or stunned
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Forgets an instruction, is confused about an assignment or position
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood, personality, or behavior changes



## SELF-REPORTED SYMPTOMS

- Headache or "pressure" in the head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness, double or blurry vision
- Bothered by light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Confusion, concentration or memory problems
- Just not "feeling right" or "feeling down"



## WHEN RECOVERING FROM A CONCUSSION

- Limit screen time to shorten the duration of symptoms
  - Avoiding screens for the first 48 hours of the injury is especially important
- Minimize work, activities, or situations that can overstimulate your brain (place limits on activities that require rapid eye movements)
  - The less stress and strain you put on your brain while it is recovering, the better and faster it will be able to recover



## HOW CAN BRAIN INJURY SERVICES OF NORTH VIRGINIA HELP?

- **Advocating for you with educators and employers:** If a medical provider has diagnosed your concussion, you may be entitled to "accommodations" at school or work. Our case managers will work with you 1:1 to help serve as liaisons on your behalf.
- **Connecting you with the latest technologies:** At BIS, we can guide you to technology tools to take pressure off your healing brain, like ways to avoid having to read and write.
- **Counseling:** sometimes concussion can cause mental health challenges, and BIS offers individual and/or group counseling for people healing from brain injuries.