



## **Concussion Awareness**

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### ***What is a concussion?***

*Headache. Traumatic Brain Injury. Head Trauma. Brain Bleed. Impact.*

All the words above are things that many have associated with a concussion. Concussions can be a difficult concept, as there is not just one objective definition of a concussion. A 'concussion' can be defined as a multi-faceted concept where some type of force (with OR without contact) causes an imbalance in the brain<sup>1</sup>. Whether you bang your head on the cabinet door at home, slip off the parallel bars, or get whiplash from a car accident, those are all mechanisms that can cause a concussion.

### ***How do I know if I have a concussion?***

Just like we read earlier that there is not one single definition of a concussion, there is not a sole diagnostic test that determines if you have a concussion. Concussions can be diagnosed by signs, symptoms, mechanism of injury, as well as a clinical exam involving testing of systems in your body that help your brain to function. This clinical exam can involve testing of neurological, musculoskeletal, vestibular, and cognitive systems in the body<sup>1</sup>. Many healthcare providers, including, but not limited to, physicians, athletic trainers, physical therapists, and chiropractors, can be trained in how to evaluate concussions. State laws vary on who can diagnose and clear an athlete for return to sport progress after a concussion, but they generally include a physician, physician's assistant, neuropsychologist, or nurse practitioner with training in concussion diagnosis and management.

### ***How might I feel if I have a concussion? What should I do, or not do?***

After any mechanism that involves a lot of force on your body or contact with your head, you may have some of the signs or symptoms of a concussion. Common signs and symptoms that may be from a concussion include, but are not limited to, headache, sensitivity to light and noise, vision problems, emotional disturbances,

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<sup>1</sup> *Concussion*. Ferry, B and DeCastro, A (2022). Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK537017/>

sleeping difficulties, fogginess, memory problems, feeling “not right”, concentration issues, neck pain, and loss of balance<sup>2</sup>. More severe symptoms can involve fluid draining from the ears or nose, vomiting, inability to stand or walk, slurred speech, seizures, numbness or weakness in your arms and legs. If you have any of these severe symptoms, you should seek emergency care immediately.

You *SHOULD* refrain from sports or head contact until you are evaluated by a qualified medical provider. You *SHOULD* follow the recommendations and treatment plan of the medical provider. You *SHOULD NOT* resume sports, place yourself in positions that may involve you getting hit again, or consume caffeine or alcohol.

### ***How do I get back to gymnastics if I have a concussion?***

Once you are evaluated by a qualified medical provider, your return to gymnastics will be an individualized process based off your symptoms and clinical examination. Once you are no longer having symptoms, your doctor and others on your medical team will help you complete a ‘return to sport’ progression. This is typically a 5 or more-day process of gradual skill and sport progressions back into full gymnastics.

Delaying or neglecting care for a concussion can impact the timeline for safe return to sport and may lead to long-term consequences. With proper diagnosis and management, athletes can generally return to sport safely after a concussion without any long-term issues.

For more information on Concussion in Gymnastics, click on these links:

- [Sports Concussion Overview](#)
- [Concussion Home Care Guide](#)

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<sup>2</sup> *Concussions and consequences: diagnosis, management, and prevention*. Tator, C (2013). Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3735746/>