

# Concussion:

## 5 FACTS ABOUT THIS BRAIN INJURY

Here are key insights from the webinar by Dr. Kelsy Parker on concussions:

### FACT #1 Concussions can happen to anyone.

Anyone of any age can experience a concussion, which is also called a mild traumatic brain injury\*:

- More than 80% of concussions are NOT related to organized sports.
- Most concussions happen as a result of:
  - Falls
  - Motor vehicle collisions
  - Direct or indirect injuries from accidents/assaults/violence
- Concussions are most common among those 15-34 years of age.
- Men are 2-3 times more likely to get a concussion.

*\*While it may be called "Mild," it does NOT mean the resulting symptoms, impairment or disability are mild. This is a brain injury and should be taken seriously and treated as such.*

### FACT #2 Concussions show up in different ways.

Know what to look for to identify the injury.

A concussion is:	A concussion is NOT:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Induced by a traumatic event</li><li>■ A disturbance in brain function</li><li>■ Complex (it can look different in different people)</li><li>■ Not explained by substances, other injuries or ailments</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Progressive or worsening symptoms</li><li>■ Diagnosable by imaging</li><li>■ A "one-size-fits-all" injury</li><li>■ A minor injury that you should "push through" or tough out</li></ul>

SIGNS What people can notice about others	SYMPTOMS What people may experience themselves
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Poor balance or coordination</li><li>■ Slow or slurred speech</li><li>■ Poor concentration</li><li>■ Delayed responses to questions</li><li>■ Vacant stare</li><li>■ Sleep disturbance</li><li>■ Disorientation <i>Can't remember time, date, place</i></li><li>■ Unusual emotions, personality change, inappropriate behavior</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <b>Physical</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Headache, blurred vision</li><li>• Sensitive to light, noise, smells</li><li>• Fatigue, muscle weakness</li></ul></li><li>■ <b>Cognitive</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inability to think clearly</li><li>• Inability to concentrate</li><li>• Inability to retain new information</li></ul></li><li>■ <b>Emotional</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Easily irritated</li><li>• Emotionally imbalanced</li></ul></li><li>■ <b>Sleep</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficulty falling asleep</li><li>• Change in sleep patterns</li></ul></li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nausea/vomiting</li><li>• Dizziness</li><li>• Seizures</li><li>• Confusion</li><li>• Feeling slowed down</li><li>• Sadness</li><li>• Nervousness or anxiety</li><li>• Insomnia</li></ul>

*Symptoms may appear right away or may appear later. They may vary and last for days or weeks.*

## **RED FLAG** symptoms that should be seen by a healthcare provider immediately:

- Neck pain or tenderness
- Weakness or tingling/burning in arms/legs
- Seizure or convulsion
- Deteriorating conscious state
- Increasingly restless, agitated, or combative
- Double vision
- Severe or increasing headache
- Loss of consciousness
- Vomiting

## **FACT #3** Getting early treatment can improve recovery.

Once you recognize the signs or symptoms of a concussion, treatment may include the following:

- "Relative rest"
  - 24-48 hours after injury, minimize energy demands
  - Limited activities that don't make symptoms worse – if it hurts, don't do it
  - Normal self-care activities such as eating, sleeping, bathing
  - Physical rest (NOT dark room or cocoon or restricted sleep)
  - Gradual increase in activities, as symptoms allow
- Evaluation by medical provider within at least a week
- Symptomatic treatment focus
- Sub-symptom exercises
- Interdisciplinary approach, based on symptoms
- Specific treatment options
- Psychosocial therapy

## **FACT #4** Treatment can include many types of providers.

Because brain injuries show up in diverse ways, different types of providers may be involved in treatment and recovery, including:

- Medical Provider *Family, Pediatrics, IM, EM, Sports training, PM&R, Neurology, Psychiatry*
- Physical therapy
- Speech language pathology
- Psychology
- Occupational therapy
- Visual therapy *Neuro-optometry/Neuro-ophthalmology*
- Neuropsychology

## **FACT #5** Avoiding repeat injury is vital.

Once someone has had a concussion, use every precaution to avoid reinjury:

- Same-day re-injury can cause permanent damage or even death – especially in sports, follow this safety motto: *"If in doubt, sit it out."*
- Injury during recovery can set back recovery and prolong a return to normal activities.
- Injury after recovery can have long-term, unknown consequences.

## **Additional Resource:**

Sports Concussion Assessment Tool 5

<https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/bjsports/51/11/851.full.pdf>

