Concussion Information

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury. It results from a significant blow or jolt to the head or body. Symptoms can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally functions. Most people will only experience the symptoms from a concussion for a short period of time. But sometimes concussions can lead to long-lasting problems. Concussions are usually not life threatening if treated properly, but the effects can be serious. Some symptoms may appear right away, while others might not show up for days.

What are the symptoms of a concussion?

- Headaches, nausea, vomiting, blurred vision, sensitivity to sound, sensitivity to light, loss of consciousness, balance problems or clumsiness, dizziness, having no energy or feeling tired, numbness or tingling, neck pain, and ringing in the ears.
- Difficulty thinking clearly, feeling slowed down, easily confused, difficulty concentrating, difficulty remembering or memory loss, difficulty following directions or conversation, answers questions slowly or repeatedly, dazed or stunned look, and personality changes.
- Irritability, sadness, more emotional than usual, nervousness or anxiety, and lack of motivation.
- Sleeping more than usual, sleeping less than usual, trouble falling asleep, and drowsiness.

Common statements from a person with a concussion:

- “I just don’t feel like myself.”
- “Everything looks foggy.”
- “I feel like something’s not right.”
- “The room is spinning.”
Serious warning signs to look for.

Muscle weakness and/or numbness on one or both sides of the body, prolonged vomiting, unequal pupils, unusual eye movements, headaches that get significantly worse, or not being able to remember people or places are warning signs. If you or your friend experiences any of these symptoms call, visit or tell one of the LaGrange College Athletic Training Staff!

If you can’t awaken your friend, they have altered levels of consciousness (hard to arouse, going in and out of consciousness, etc.), or they have convulsions or seizures CALL 911!

What is the timeline for recovery?

All brain injuries are different and so is recovery. Most people with mild concussions recover fully, but it can take time. Some symptoms can last for days, weeks, or longer.

If you have had a concussion before it may take longer to recover from your current concussion. After several concussions, it takes less of a blow to cause the injury and requires more time to recover.

Factors that play a role in recovery are how severe the concussion is, what part of the brain is injured, your age, how healthy you were before the concussion, and how well you listen to the athletic training staff.

REST is very important after a concussion because it helps the brain to heal. As the days go by, you can expect to gradually feel better, but you’ll need to be patient.

What NOT to do.

DO NOT take medications that thin your blood such as blood thinners (anticoagulant drugs), aspirin, ibuprofen, Advil, etc. If you are in pain ask one of the LaGrange College Athletic Training Staff if it is safe for you to take Tylenol which doesn’t thin the blood.

Inform the staff if you are taking any other drugs for any other reasons.

DO NOT drink alcoholic beverages or take recreational drugs, these WILL increase your risk for complications!
What risks come with concussions?

While you are healing, you should be very careful to avoid doing anything that could cause a blow or jolt to your head.

RECEIVING ANOTHER CONCUSSION BEFORE YOUR FIRST CONCUSSION HAS HEALED CAN BE FATAL!

People who have had repeated brain injuries may have serious problems later in life. For example, patients with a history of traumatic brain injuries were found to express Alzheimer’s disease a median of eight years younger than patients without a history of brain injuries.

Why should I be honest and listen to the athletic training staff and what might happen if I don't?

Second Impact Syndrome - can occur in an athlete who sustains a second head injury before symptoms of a prior head injury have totally resolved. A second collision (even a very small, minor collision) results in sudden collapse and rapid deterioration of the athlete's condition. Immediate on-field recognition and treatment are essential but sometimes still not successful in preventing death. The condition is often fatal, and almost everyone that is not killed is severely disabled.

This syndrome is why it is important to be honest with the athletic training staff. If you return to your sport too soon and sustain another concussion or even minor head shake you could quickly deteriorate into a coma and heart/respiratory failure. The usual interval from second impact to brain stem failure is short, usually 2 to 5 minutes making it next to impossible to be saved.

“Your life is worth more than playing in the next game or practice.”

True stories and case studies

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<tr>
<th>Amateur Boxer, age 19</th>
<th>First injury: Knocked out during fight</th>
<th>Post-concussion symptoms: Headache</th>
<th>Second Impact: 1 day later, athlete collapsed during round 2 following &quot;minor&quot; blows to the head</th>
<th>Outcome: Seizure, cerebral edema, and hematoma caused athlete to die 6 days after second impact</th>
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<tr>
<td>Football Player, age 17</td>
<td>First injury: Grade 1 concussion during football game; brief loss of consciousness</td>
<td>Post-concussion symptoms: Headache</td>
<td>Second Impact: 1 week later, athlete suffered successive strikes to the head play after play finally causing athlete to collapse</td>
<td>Outcome: Cerebral swelling, hydrocephalus, hematoma, and hemorrhaging caused athlete to die 15 hours following second impact</td>
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True stories and case studies

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<th>Ice Hockey Player, age 16</th>
<th>First Injury: Struck back of head on the ice; brief loss of consciousness</th>
<th>Post-concussion symptoms: Headache, unsteadiness</th>
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<td>Second Impact: 4 days later, athlete struck left temple on ice causing a loss of consciousness (duration unknown)</td>
<td>Outcome: Cerebral swelling, hematoma, hemorrhaging caused this athlete to die 2 hours following the second impact</td>
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**Case 1:** During October 1991, a 17-year-old high school football player was tackled on the last day of the first half of a varsity game and struck his head on the ground. During half-time intermission, he told a teammate that he felt ill and had a headache; he did not tell his coach or athletic trainer. He played again during the third quarter and received several routine blows to his helmet during blocks and tackles. He then collapsed on the field and was taken to a local hospital in a coma. A computerized tomography (CT-Scan) brain scan revealed diffuse swelling of the brain and a small subdural hematoma. He was transferred to a regional trauma center, where attempts to reduce elevated intracranial pressure were unsuccessful, and he was pronounced dead 4 days later. Autopsy revealed diffuse brain swelling focal areas of subcortical ischemia, and a small sub dural hematoma.

**Case 2:** During August 1993, a 19-year-old college football player reported headache to family members after a full contact-practice during summer training. He said nothing to his athletic trainer. During practice the following day he collapsed on the field approximately 2 minutes after engaging in a tackle. He was transported to a nearby trauma center where a CT scan of the head showed diffuse brain swelling and a thin subdural hematoma. Attempts to control the elevated intracranial pressure failed, and he was pronounced brain dead 3 days later. Autopsy revealed the brain to be diffusely swollen with evidence of cerebrovascular congestion and features of temporal lobe herniation.

For more information and true stories watch this ESPN video:

Outside the Lines: Second Impact Syndrome
http://sports.espn.go.com/broadband/video/cljp?id=3651929&categoryid=null