



Comprehensive Concussion Care

at Tahoe Forest Health System for Patients

Table of Contents

Introduction to Concussions:	2
What is a Concussion?	2
Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion You Can See	2
Symptoms of a Concussion You Might Feel	2
What to Do if You Think Someone Has a Concussion	2
Warning Signs That Need Immediate Medical Help (Call 911, go to the ER, or see a doctor right away.)	3
Our Team: Expert Concussion Care	3
Concussion Recovery Guide: Home Management, Returning to Life, School, Work, and Sports	5
Home Management Tips	5
Returning to Your Regular Life	5
Returning to School or Work	5
Returning to Exercise and Sports	5
Post-Concussion Syndrome (Prolonged Recovery)	6
What Happens Next?	7
If you think you might have a concussion	7
If a doctor thinks you have a concussion	7
Getting Back to Normal	7
Additional Resources	7
Concussion Symptom Log	8

Introduction to Concussions:

What is a Concussion?

A concussion is a type of brain injury that happens when the head gets bumped, hit, or jolted. Even a small bump can be serious. Signs of a concussion can show up right after the injury or take days or even weeks to appear. If you think someone might have a concussion, get medical help right away.

Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion You Can See

- The person looks dazed, confused, or stunned.
- They might forget things, feel disoriented, or not follow instructions.
- They could move clumsily or answer questions slowly.
- The person might pass out, even for a short time.
- You might notice changes in their mood, personality, or behavior.

Symptoms of a Concussion You Might Feel

Physical:

- Headache or pressure in your head
- Neck pain, dizziness, or balance problems
- Nausea or vomiting
- Blurry vision or sensitivity to light and noise

Thinking (Cognitive):

- Feeling slow or “foggy”
- Having trouble concentrating or remembering things
- Feeling tired or low on energy

Emotional:

- Feeling more emotional, irritable, sad, or anxious

Sleep:

- Trouble falling asleep
- Sleeping too much or too little

What to Do if You Think Someone Has a Concussion

1. **Know the Signs:** Even one symptom might mean a concussion.
2. **Get Help:** Tell someone and see a doctor right away.
3. **Rest First:** Don't go back to sports, work, or play until a healthcare professional says it's okay.
4. **Share Your History:** Let the coach, supervisor, or medical team know about past concussions.

5. **Take Time to Heal:** Recover fully before returning to activities to avoid another concussion.

Warning Signs That Need Immediate Medical Help

(Call 911, go to the ER, or see a doctor right away.)

- Symptoms are getting worse
- Trouble staying awake or waking up
- Severe or worsening headache
- Difficulty walking or losing balance
- Shaking or twitching (seizures)
- Vision problems or trouble talking/hearing
- Repeated vomiting or feeling very sick
- Stiff neck or a high fever
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or clumsiness
- Unusual behavior, confusion, or acting restless
- Passing out (losing consciousness)

Our Team: Expert Concussion Care

Emergency Department:

Emergency physicians and NPPs at Tahoe Forest Health District are often the first to treat concussions. They evaluate head injuries, rule out other conditions, and refer patients to a Sports Medicine or Primary Care physicians/NPPs for follow-up care.

Urgent Care:

Urgent Care doctors at Tahoe Forest Health District often see patients with concussions first. They check for head injuries, make sure there are no other problems, and provide initial care. If a patient can't visit their regular doctor in a timely manner for follow-up after concussion, our Urgent Care team can help with follow-up care to make sure they heal properly.

Certified Athletic Trainers (ATCs):

Our Athletic Trainers are board-certified medical professionals trained in concussion care. They work with local high schools and ski teams, providing injury evaluations, rehabilitation, and prevention, including for concussions. They also guide athletes through the return-to-play process, following a protocol approved by a physician/NPP.

Primary Care and Pediatrics:

Our Primary Care and Pediatric teams are skilled in evaluating and treating general concussions. They handle non-sport-related cases, perform initial exams and follow-ups, provide clearance for Return to School, Return to Sport, or Return to Work, and offer referrals for further care.

Sports Medicine:

Tahoe Forest has three board-certified Sports Medicine physicians: **Dr. Nina Winans** and **Dr. Kari Rezac**. These doctors are highly experienced in managing concussions and focus on

sport-related concussions. They perform initial exams, follow-ups, and provide clearance for Return to Sport and Return to School. They can also refer patients for additional care if needed.

Neurology:

Board-certified neurologists **Dr. Cherisse Mwero and Dr. Joshua Kreiss** specialize in neurological disorders including treating post-concussion symptoms. They provide consultations when referred by a Primary Care or Sports Medicine provider.

Neuropsychology:

Neuropsychologist **Dr. Beth Lavin** assesses and treats cognitive, emotional, and behavioral challenges after a concussion. They develop personalized strategies to improve memory, focus, and daily function. Patients with persistent symptoms like brain fog or mood changes may benefit from an evaluation. Referrals are required from a physician/NPP.

Physical Therapy:

Physical therapists assess patients with lingering concussion symptoms (lasting more than 2–3 weeks). They evaluate symptoms like headaches, dizziness, and neck pain and provide exercises to aid recovery. Treatment may target areas such as balance, eye movement, neck pain, or coordination. Temporary increases in symptoms like headaches or dizziness during therapy are normal and part of the healing process. Referrals to physical therapy come from a physician/NPP.

Occupational Therapy:

Occupational therapists address physical, cognitive, and behavioral challenges caused by concussions. They evaluate issues like trouble reading, sleep problems, and fatigue. Therapy focuses on helping patients return to daily activities like work, school, and social interactions. Referrals are required from a physician/NPP.

Speech Therapy:

Speech therapists help patients struggling with memory, concentration, problem-solving, or communication after a concussion. They evaluate cognitive and communication skills and create strategies to support recovery at school, work, or in social settings. Referrals are required from a physician/NPP.

Nutrition:

A healthy diet is key to supporting brain recovery. A registered dietitian can design a personalized eating plan to improve brain health and address conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes. Dietician consults are not covered by insurance. The cost of an initial consultation for an adult is \$110 and for a youth, aged 17 or younger, it is \$130. A patient does not need a referral and consults are open to the community. Contact: 530-587-3769 for an appointment.

Concussion Recovery Guide: Home Management, Returning to Life, School, Work, and Sports

Home Management Tips

- **Rest Smart:** Rest for 1–3 days but stay lightly active as tolerated. Light activity can help speed recovery.
 - **Sleep Well:** Sleep uninterrupted, follow a regular sleep schedule, and limit daytime naps.
 - **Minimize Screens:** Limit screen time and avoid headphones if sensitive to noise.
 - **Balanced Environment:** Avoid staying in a dark room all day—get natural light as tolerated.
 - **Stay Hydrated & Eat Healthy:** Follow a nutritious diet and drink plenty of water.
 - **Avoid Alcohol:** Refrain from drinking alcohol while healing.
 - **Exercise Lightly:** Begin with gentle physical activity if symptoms allow.
-

Returning to Your Regular Life

- Gradually increase activity levels based on how you feel.
 - Monitor your symptoms daily with the **Daily Symptom Log** (found at the back of this packet).
 - Take “brain breaks” during the day if needed, resting to recharge.
 - Slowly extend activity time as symptoms improve.
 - If symptoms worsen, take more breaks or adjust your activities.
-

Returning to School or Work

Work with your physician/NPP to follow a gradual return plan, such as:

1. **Rest:** Reduce screen time and physical/mental strain until symptoms improve.
2. **Light Activities:** Engage in mild tasks that don’t increase symptoms.
3. **Prepare for Work/School:** Start with homework, reading, or light meetings outside regular environments.
4. **Part-Time Return:** Begin school or work part-time, taking breaks as needed.
5. **Full-Time Return:** Gradually resume full days when symptoms are under control.

Note: If you tolerate mental activities without symptoms, you may skip Step 2 and return part-time.

Returning to Exercise and Sports

Follow your physician/NPP's step-by-step plan. Progression should allow at least **24 hours between stages** with no symptom increase. If symptoms worsen, return to the previous stage for at least 24 hours before trying again:

1. **Rest:** Perform daily tasks without symptom increase. Try 10 minutes of light activity (e.g., walking).
2. **Light Activity:** Stationary cycling, brisk walking.
3. **Moderate Activity:** Non-contact sport-specific exercises (e.g., team warm-ups, jogging).
4. **Moderate to Strenuous Activity:** Non-contact training (e.g., resistance training, small-sided drills).
5. **Medical Clearance:** Obtain signed clearance from a medical professional trained in concussion care.
6. **Contact Training:** Begin limited-contact sessions, then progress to full-contact sessions.
7. **Full Release to Sport:** Return to normal sports activities once fully cleared.

Note: If symptoms persist, discuss additional accommodations with your physician/NPP.

Post-Concussion Syndrome (Prolonged Recovery)

Recovery times vary after a concussion. While most people feel better within 1–2 weeks, some experience symptoms lasting longer than 2–3 weeks, called Post-Concussion Syndrome (PCS). Symptoms may include:

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Trouble concentrating or remembering

If these symptoms interfere with daily life, schedule a follow-up with your primary care provider (PCP).

Treatment

Physical, Occupational, or Speech Therapists may help address:

- Balance/Dizziness: Treating motion sensitivity and coordination issues.
- Eye Issues: Reducing blurred vision, eye fatigue, or headaches.
- Neck Pain: Managing headaches or pain from neck injuries.
- Mood/Stress: Addressing anxiety, sadness, or irritability.
- Cognition: Improving focus, memory, and energy.

Note: Therapy may temporarily worsen symptoms (e.g., headaches/dizziness) as part of recovery.

When to Seek Additional Help

If symptoms last beyond two months, your doctor may refer you to specialists like a neurologist, neuropsychologist, or psychiatrist.

Each recovery is unique—stay in touch with your healthcare team for the best care.

What Happens Next?

If you think you might have a concussion

1. **Tell an adult:** Let your parent, guardian, teacher, or coach know right away.
2. **See a doctor:** A doctor can check you out and tell you what to do next.

If a doctor thinks you have a concussion

- **Rest:** You'll need to rest your brain. This means no video games, TV, or computer.
- **No school:** You might need to stay home from school for a while.
- **No sports:** Don't play any sports or do any physical activity.
- **Follow the doctor's advice:** Do what your doctor says to get better.

Getting Back to Normal

- **Return to school:** Your doctor will let you know when it's safe to go back to school.
- **Return to sports:** You'll need to follow a special plan to get back to sports safely. Your doctor or a sports medicine specialist can help you with this.

Remember: It's important to follow all the steps to recover from a concussion. Don't rush back to activities before you're ready.

Additional Resources

- CDC Information on Concussions:
 - www.cdc.gov/heads-up/
- California Interscholastic Federation Concussion Information:
 - cifstate.org/sports-medicine/concussions
- Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association Concussion Policy:
 - https://www.niaa.com/misc/Health_Education/2024-25_NIAA_Return_to_Play_-_Concussion_Policy.pdf

Concussion Symptom Log

Rate on 0-6 intensity scale
0=not present, 1-2=mild, 3-4=moderate, 5=moderately severe, 6=severe

	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE
Symptoms	Day of Injury								
Cognitive									
Difficulty thinking clearly									
Difficulty concentrating									
Difficulty remembering									
Feeling slowed down									
Feeling sluggish or hazy									
Physical									
Headache									
Nausea									
Vomiting									
Balance Problems									
Dizziness									
Fatigue									
Vision changes									
Sensitive to noise									
Sensitive to light									
Numbness or tingling									
Weakness in extremities									
Neck pain									
Emotional									
Irritability									
Sadness									
More emotional than usual									
Nervous									
Sleep									
Sleeping more than usual									
Sleeping less than usual									
Drowsiness									