



SHIFT BRIEFING



CONCUSSION - SIGNS, SYMPTOMS, & TREATMENTS

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury – or TBI – caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head. Concussions can also be caused by a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth, referred to as coup-counter coup. An example is hitting a solid object while driving in your vehicle. During the initial impact, your head snaps forward until a seatbelt or airbag stops it. Then your head snaps back until it hits your headrest. These sudden movements can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, creating chemical changes in the brain from the stretching and damaging of brain cells.

Medical providers may describe a concussion as a “mild” brain injury because concussions are usually not life-threatening. Even so, the effects of a concussion can be serious.

Signs and symptoms of concussions fall into three categories:

Physical – includes headaches, blurred vision, dizziness or balance problems, nausea or vomiting, sensitivity to light or noise, and sleep difficulties

Thinking – includes difficulty thinking or concentrating, feeling lethargic, or remembering new information

Emotional – includes irritability, wide emotional swings, or extreme feeling of sadness

Some symptoms may appear immediately, while others may not be noticed for days after the injury or until the person resumes their everyday life. Be alert; people do not always recognize or admit that they are having problems.

Our policy is that if any worker sustains an injury to the head, *insert who within your agency* be immediately contacted by phone. If any of the symptoms below are observed, also immediately call 9-1-1 for emergency medical response:

- Loss of consciousness Convulsions or seizures
- Cannot recognize people or places
- Vomiting
- Slurred speech or decreased coordination

People with a concussion need to be seen by a healthcare professional to determine the severity and proper treatment. It may be important to perform a functional baseline test so changes in mental status can quickly be identified. While most people are evaluated and treated in an emergency department or medical office, some people must stay in the hospital overnight. The healthcare professional may do a scan of your brain (such as a CT scan) or other tests. Additional tests might be necessary, such as tests of your learning, memory concentration, and problem-solving.

Tell the physician if you are taking prescription or over-the-counter medicines, or ‘natural remedies,’ or if you drink alcohol or take illegal drugs. Also, tell the doctor if you are taking blood thinners (anticoagulant drugs), such as Coumadin and aspirin because they can increase the chance of complications.