

Concussion in Alaska: Mental Health Impacts

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI) caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly back and forth. This movement can stretch and damage brain cells in a way that disrupts normal brain function.

The changes that occur in the brain after a concussion can impact thinking, mood, physical abilities, or sleep. Concussions can also make it harder to keep up with normal routines, leading to added stress. Up to 1 in 5 individuals experience mental health symptoms within 6 months following a concussion.¹ People with a history of concussions are also at higher risk for long-term mental health complications or thoughts of suicide.²

Understanding how a concussion can affect your mental health is the first step in making sense of your symptoms. Getting support early can help you feel better and improve your recovery.

Mood & Behavioral Symptoms

Concussions can cause a wide range of symptoms. Mood and behavior changes are common but sometimes overlooked because they may be subtle or develop over time.

These changes may include:

Social withdrawal

Irritability

Depression

Anxiety

Suicidal thoughts or ideation

Give Yourself Space

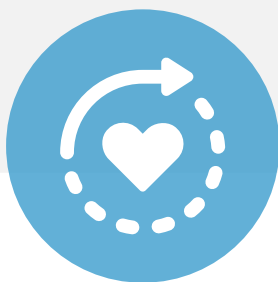
It's okay to take time away from your usual routine after a concussion. Giving yourself space helps you understand how the injury is affecting you.

You don't need to "tough it out." Changes in your life and symptoms can be upsetting, and it's normal to feel that way. It's also okay to grieve what has changed or been lost. Taking care of your mental and emotional health is just as important as treating the injury itself.

Planning for Success

Recovering from a concussion can look different for everyone. Mental health symptoms may come and go, change over time, or be hard to explain. It can be difficult to know what's normal and when to ask for help.

Keeping notes about your symptoms and how you're feeling each day can help you recognize patterns and changes over time. This makes it easier to talk with your healthcare provider and decide what kind of care or support might help.



Paying attention to your emotional recovery is just as important as healing your body.

Getting the Support You Need

It's normal to feel overwhelmed after a concussion, especially if symptoms last longer than expected — but you're not alone. Support is available from family, friends, and professionals.

Here are some ways to support recovery and improve mental health:

Stay Connected: Talk openly with people you trust. Sharing how you feel can ease stress and build your support network.

Build Routine: Regular sleep, meals, gentle activity, and quiet time help your brain heal.

Write It Down: Keep track of your symptoms and feelings. Notes can help your healthcare providers understand what you're experiencing.

Ask for Help: It's okay to ask for support. Your care team, family, and friends want to help you through this.

Support & Resources

[National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\) Alaska](#)

Mental health support, peer support, resources and education: info@namialaska.org

[Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)

Crisis helpline (1-800-662-4357), treatment locators, toolkits, recovery guides, and grants

[Concussion Legacy Foundation \(CLF\) HelpLine Alaska](#)

Resource facilitation and peer support: CLFHelpLineAK.org

[Alaska TBI Resource Locator](#)

TBI clinic and provider directory: TBIHelpAK.com

[Alaska Traumatic and Acquired Brain Injury \(TABI\) Program](#)

Resource facilitation, peer support, and mini grants: (907) 269-3666

[Alaska 211](#)

Statewide helpline and directory connecting Alaskans to essential health and social services: call 211

If you or a loved one is in crisis or need someone to talk to, call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline anytime. Support is free and available 24/7.

References

1. www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/mental-health-disorders-common-following-mild-head-injury
2. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33678007/>