

# Concussion in Alaska: Recognize & Respond to Injury

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.

Concussions are not usually life-threatening, but they can change how a person feels, thinks, or acts.

## Common Symptoms

**Cognitive:** confusion, slowed thinking, trouble focusing

**Mood or behavior:** anxiety, irritability, sadness, or withdrawal

**Physical:** headache, dizziness, nausea, blurry vision, sensitivity to light or noise

**Sleep:** sleeping more or less than usual, trouble falling asleep

**Some symptoms show up right away. Others might take hours or even days to appear.** It's important to take all concussions seriously and see a healthcare provider.

## Reasons to Seek Emergency Services

Seizures or convulsions

Slurred speech

Weakness, numbness, balance issues

Pupil changes

Vision changes

Increased confusion

Agitation or sudden mood change

Discharge of fluid from nose and/or ears

Loss of consciousness

Repeated nausea and vomiting

## What to Do After a Concussion

**Your immediate response to a possible concussion is crucial in your recovery.**

**Stop Activity Immediately:** Exerting yourself physically or cognitively after a head injury can delay recovery and increase the risk of a more serious or even life-threatening injury.

**Seek Medical Evaluation:** If you're experiencing any signs or symptoms of a concussion, assume it's serious and get evaluated by a qualified healthcare provider.

**Prioritize Rest:** Rest your brain and body by avoiding screens, physical activity, and overstimulation to prevent symptoms from worsening and support healing.

**Track Symptoms:** Keep a record of your symptoms and any changes to help your healthcare provider guide your treatment and identify possible triggers.

**Keep a Positive Mindset:** Most people recover within a month if they manage their symptoms well and allow time to heal. Staying positive and connecting with others can ease stress and support recovery.

## What to Avoid During Recovery

- **Physical exertion:** Avoid any strenuous activity until cleared by a healthcare provider. Light exercise that does not worsen symptoms is recommended after 48 hours of rest with guidance from a healthcare provider.
- **Screens and bright lights:** Digital screens (phones, TVs, computers) and bright lights can strain your brain and eyes. Limit both, especially in the first 48 hours to help your brain rest.
- **Loud noises and busy environments:** These can trigger headaches or sensory overload.
- **Isolation:** Share what you are going through with loved ones or trusted friends. Isolation in a dark room is not good for recovery. Physical and social isolation can lead to feelings of anxiety and depression and make recovery harder.
- **Driving or operating machinery:** Your reaction time and focus may be impaired, making these activities more risky.
- **Alcohol, illicit drugs, and certain medications:** These can interfere with brain function and mask symptoms. Tell your healthcare provider about any medications you are taking.
- **Cognitive overload:** Activities like reading, studying, or multitasking too early can make symptoms like brain fog or fatigue worse. Take breaks and ease back into thinking tasks at school or work gradually.
- **Risky activities:** Avoid anything that could lead to another head injury. A second concussion before full recovery can lead to a rare but potentially fatal condition called Second Impact Syndrome.

Maintaining a hopeful outlook can make a difference during recovery. When symptoms feel overwhelming, remember that support is available and you are not alone.

**The resources below can help connect you with the support you need.**

## Support & Resources

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

Resource facilitation and peer support: [CLFHelpLineAK.org](https://CLFHelpLineAK.org)

[Alaska TBI Resource Locator](#)

TBI clinic and provider directory: [TBIHelpAK.com](https://TBIHelpAK.com)

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

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

[Alaska 211](#)

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

[Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium](#)

Telehealth services, behavioral health resources, caregiver support education and community wellness programs: 907-563-2662