

Concussion in Alaska: What to Know

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. Concussions are usually not life-threatening, but they can change how a person feels, thinks, or acts. Every concussion should be taken seriously, and the sooner it is recognized and managed, the better the chances for a full and smooth recovery.

Understanding concussions can help you make informed decisions and get the support you need, especially in communities where access to medical care may be limited or delayed. This guide provides key facts and information to help you better understand concussions and feel more confident as you navigate recovery.

What Happens in the Brain After a Concussion?



The brain moves rapidly inside the skull, which can stretch and damage brain cells



This injury triggers chemical and metabolic changes that disrupt how brain cells communicate



These changes affect how the brain functions and can cause a variety of physical, emotional, and cognitive symptoms



After injury, the brain works to restore normal function by rebalancing chemicals, which requires a lot of energy.

Most people recover fully within a month, but doing too much too soon can make symptoms worse or last longer. Getting rest and slowly returning to activity helps the brain recover safely.

Key Facts About Concussions



A concussion can result from any force that causes the brain to jolt inside the skull, not just a direct hit to the head.



Most people with a concussion do not lose consciousness at the time of injury.



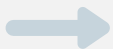
Helmets can reduce the risk of severe brain injuries or skull fractures but do not completely prevent concussions.



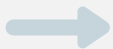
Physical and mental rest during the first 24 to 48 hours after a concussion is essential to help the brain begin the healing process.



Getting consistent, quality sleep supports brain recovery and can help reduce concussion symptoms like headaches, fatigue, and difficulty concentrating.



Ignoring symptoms like headaches, memory issues, or light sensitivity can lead to delayed recovery or serious complications.



A safe recovery from a concussion requires a gradual return to activity guided by a healthcare provider.

Impact on Mental Health



Mental health challenges after a concussion are real and often overlooked.

Recognizing these changes and reaching out for help is important.

With the right support and resources, these symptoms can and will improve.

- Up to 1 in 5 people experience mental health symptoms 6 months after a TBI.¹
- Recent research has shown links between concussions, mental health problems, and suicide.²
- Youth with a history of concussion are 40% more likely to experience mental health challenges and self-harm compared to orthopedic injuries.³
- Between 2016 and 2021, Alaska's traumatic brain injury (TBI) death rate was more than twice the national average, with suicide as the leading cause.⁴

Support & Resources

Finding Medical and Mental Healthcare

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

Resource facilitation and peer support: CLFHelpLineAK.org

[Alaska TBI Resource Locator](#)

TBI clinic and provider directory: TBIHelpAK.com

Additional Support & Resources

[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

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

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

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

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3. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8902648/>
4. https://epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/rr2023_02.pdf