



# Concussion: Symptoms and Signs

*This is not a definitive document on concussions. The following is meant as a guideline to assist BIFC Coaches and Parents in identifying a player who may have suffered a concussion. When in doubt, please contact a licensed health care professional.*

A concussion is defined as *a trauma- induced functional neurologic deficit*. In other words, **ANY** forceful blow to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head can lead to changes in the way the brain functions.

This means that a concussion does not require a direct blow to the head but any force which jolts the brain hard enough to affect brain function.

It is important to realize that loss of consciousness is not required for a head injury to be diagnosed as a concussion; in fact most people who suffer from concussions do not lose consciousness.

In identifying an athlete with a concussion, we look for the most common signs and symptoms. **Symptoms** are conditions that the athlete will report themselves, things that are affecting them and what they are experiencing. A **sign** is something that a coach, parent, referee or teammate may notice when evaluating an athlete on or off the field.

Common **symptoms** that may be reported:

- Headache or "pressure" in the head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right"

Common **signs** observed by parents, coaches, trainers or teammates:

- Appearing dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets plays
- Is unsure of the game, score or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness
- Shows behavioral or personality changes
- Cannot recall events before or after a hit or fall



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The following is a new 2012 Policy from Washington Youth Soccer and Washington Soccer Referees establishing procedures that if from the view of a referee a player is suspected to have suffered a concussion.

"If the referee suspects a participant in their youth game is suffering from a concussion:

- 1) The referee must immediately stop play if the ball is still in play
- 2) The participant must leave the field, with assistance if necessary, before play can be resumed
- 3) The referee will advise both coach and player that by Washington Law, future participation in sports requires that they cannot return to play until the athlete has been evaluated by a licensed health care provider and received a written clearance to play
- 4) Once off, the participant is no longer a player, substitute or substituted player; and the athlete is disqualified from further participation in this game."

If you as a Coach or parent of a player suspect your player has suffered a concussion, don't wait for the referee to make a determination. Make them sit out and get them checked by a licensed health care professional.

***"When in doubt – Sit them out!"***

*Sources: Washington State Referee Committee Policy on Safety April 2012  
Article 1 Concussion*

[www.accesssportsmed.com](http://www.accesssportsmed.com) "How to Identify and Treat a Concussion"