



## CONCUSSION IN THE WORKPLACE



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*This Fast Fact is intended for use by employers, workers, JHSC member and H&S representatives to understand the basics of concussion including cases, symptoms and prevention tips. Concussions do not always manifest itself so clearly, hence why it is an important emerging issue that requires awareness*

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### WHAT IS CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury, caused by impact to the head or body, which causes the brain to make impact or twist within the skull. This trauma produces stretching and compression and temporary damage to nerve fibers in the brain and causes short term changes in mental function. It is important to note that concussion can still occur even if the affected individual does not become unconscious.

In Canada, workers in public sector, heavy industry and construction are at high risk of concussion, although other sectors are also not immune to the risk.

### CAUSES OF CONCUSSION

Concussion can be due to car or bicycle accidents, slip, trips or falls, contact sports such as football, and during physical fighting or assault.

### SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

There are a number of symptoms you may experience after having a concussion. These symptoms can start immediately, or begin days after the injury. It is common to experience physical, cognitive, emotional, and/or fatigue related symptoms due to the chemical changes in the brain. The symptoms vary between people depending on which part of the brain the injury impacted, and may also take a few hours or days for the symptoms to appear.

While your brain is recovering from the trauma, it is important to be mindful of the fact you will have less energy to do the things you need and want to do. Some of the common symptoms you may experience after a concussion are:

- Fatigue and brain fog
- Poor quality sleep
- Headache
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Light-headedness
- Sensitivity to noise or light
- Irritability
- Poor memory and concentration
- Easily agitated
- Feeling anxious
- Blurred vision

Mild cases take days or weeks, and severe cases take months or years to recover from. After a prolonged period of time, psychological, emotional and biological factors stemming from the concussion may lead to post-concussion syndrome (PCS) which is the persistence of concussion symptoms. PCS can unfortunately hinder the timely return to work of the worker since it can be hard to prove but also to identify due to lack of visible signs. Symptoms of the PCS include memory problems, mental health issues such as depression or anxiety, fatigue and other cognitive concerns as well.

## PREVENTION

Concussion can be prevented in the workplace because the primary cause of a concussion is an accident. Concussion can be prevented by:

- Reporting hazards that can cause head injury or slips trips and falls.
- Remove any tripping hazards and control falling hazards
- Use warning signs about nearby hazard which can cause injury
- Use proper personal protective equipment (PPE) such as hard hat non-slippery boots and harness
- Train the workers in the correct way to use controls such as ladders, harness, elevated platforms.
- Use proper storing techniques to prevent items from falling on workers.

Concussion can be prevented if the workers can be protected from an injury to their head or body. The best way to prevent this from happening is by creating awareness, training workers and ensuring appropriate controls are put into place to prevent the causes of concussion from happening.

## GETTING HELP

If an individual has a concussion or symptoms resembling concussion, seek immediate medical care.

For more information on concussion hazards and prevention, you can look at the PSHSA website <https://www.pshsa.ca/> or at the additional resources provided below:

- <http://concussionsontario.org/access-to-care/concussion-data/>
- <http://concussionsontario.org/facts-and-faqs/>
- <https://www.ontario.ca/page/rowans-law-concussion-safety>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/concussion-sign-symptoms.html>
- [https://www.ohcow.on.ca/edit/files/events/2019/rsi\\_day/concussions\\_in\\_the\\_workplace.pdf](https://www.ohcow.on.ca/edit/files/events/2019/rsi_day/concussions_in_the_workplace.pdf)
- <https://cattonline.com/concussion-information-package-for-workers-workplaces-pdf/>