

Westosha Falcons Youth Cheer, Westosha Central High School, and Accelerated Sports Medicine Services Concussion Education Information

What is a Concussion and How Does It Occur?

A concussion is a brain injury that interferes with normal brain function. It affects the way an individual thinks, acts, behaves, and performs physical skills needed for daily activities. Each concussion is unique, but common signs and symptoms can indicate whether an individual has sustained one. A concussion can result from a bump, blow, jolt, or fall to the head or body. These forces cause the brain to hit the inside of the skull or twist within it, leading to changes in brain function. Even a mild impact can cause a concussion, and proper management is essential.

Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion

Concussion symptoms can develop immediately, within 24 hours, or even over the following week. The severity varies, and symptoms may appear mild but can have long-term mental, physical, and psychological effects if not properly addressed. A person can have a concussion without losing consciousness. Symptoms may last from less than a day to several weeks or more. CT, MRI, or CAT scans often appear normal, as they do not detect the physiological changes caused by concussions. Imaging is used to rule out other head injuries such as skull fractures. A clear scan does not rule out a concussion.

Common Signs and Symptoms:

Thinking/Remembering:	Physical:	Emotional/Mood:	Sleep:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty thinking clearly• Feeling slowed down or foggy• Trouble concentrating or focusing• Amnesia (memory loss)• Difficulty remembering new or old information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headache• Fuzzy or blurred vision• Nausea or vomiting• Dizziness• Sensitivity to light or noise• Fatigue or low energy• Decreased balance and coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Irritability• Sadness or emotional changes• Nervousness or anxiety• Slow responses or confusion• Dazed or stunned appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sleeping more or less than usual• Trouble falling or staying asleep

What to Do if a Concussion is Suspected?

If a concussion is suspected during cheerleading activities, the individual must be immediately removed from participation. Continuing activity with a concussion can worsen symptoms, prolong recovery, and increase the risk of severe brain injuries such as second-impact syndrome or post-concussive syndrome. The rule of thumb is: **"When in doubt, sit them out."**

Westosha Falcons Youth Cheer requires immediate removal from activity and medical evaluation for any athlete suspected of having a concussion. Early detection and proper management can speed up recovery and prevent further injury. An athlete should only return to cheerleading activities after being cleared by a qualified medical professional trained in concussion management.