

# CONCUSSION GUIDE FOR REFEREES

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## What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury that cannot be seen on routine X-rays, CT scans, or MRIs. It affects the way you may think and remember things, and can cause a variety of symptoms.

## What are the signs and symptoms of a concussion?

**A person does not need to be knocked out (lose consciousness) to have had a concussion.** They might experience one or more of the following:

COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS	PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS	OTHER SIGNS/SYMPTOMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do not know time, date, place, status of the competition, or opponent</li> <li>▪ General confusion</li> <li>▪ Cannot remember things that happened before and after the injury</li> <li>▪ Knocked out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Headache</li> <li>▪ Dizziness</li> <li>▪ Feeling dazed</li> <li>▪ Feeling “dinged” or stunned; “having my bell rung”</li> <li>▪ Seeing stars, flashing lights</li> <li>▪ Ringing in the ears</li> <li>▪ Sleepiness</li> <li>▪ Seeing double or blurry vision</li> <li>▪ Nausea or vomiting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poor co-ordination or balance</li> <li>▪ Blank stare/glassy-eyed</li> <li>▪ Slow to answer questions or follow directions</li> <li>▪ Easily distracted</li> <li>▪ Strange or inappropriate emotions (i.e., laughing, crying, getting mad easily)</li> <li>▪ Not participating as well</li> </ul>

**Get medical help immediately if an athlete has any “red flag” symptoms** such as neck pain, repeated vomiting, growing confusion, seizures, and weakness or tingling in your arms or legs. These may be signs of a more serious injury.

## What causes a concussion?

Any blow to the head, face or neck, or a blow to the body which causes a sudden jarring of the head may cause a concussion (e.g., a kick to the head, kick to the body).

## What should I do if I think an athlete might have a concussion?

**In all suspected cases of concussion, the athlete should stop all sport activity right away.** Continuing to compete increases their risk of more severe, longer-lasting concussion symptoms, as well as increases their risk of other injury.

The Concussion Recognition Tool 5 (CRT5) can be used by anyone to help recognize the signs and symptoms of a possible concussion.

The athlete should not be left alone and should be seen by a doctor as soon as possible that day. They should not drive.

If the athlete loses consciousness, call an ambulance to take them to the hospital right away. Do not move them or remove any equipment such as a helmet.

The athlete should not return to any sport activity the same day.

## What happens after an athlete is removed due to a suspected concussion?

The athlete will be assessed by an emergency medical professional or by an on-site licensed healthcare professional where available. In cases where an athlete loses consciousness or exhibits any of the other “Red flag” symptoms, they should be transported to a hospital immediately.

If a more severe injury is not suspected, the athlete should undergo Sideline Medical Assessment or Medical Assessment, depending on if there is a licensed healthcare professional present. The athlete’s parents/caregivers should be notified and the athlete should be closely monitored until their parents/caregivers arrive. If the athlete experiences constant or worsening concussion symptoms, they should make an appointment with their medical doctor or nurse practitioner.

It is very important that an athlete not go back to full participation in sport if they have any concussion signs or symptoms. Return to sport and physical activity must follow a step-wise approach.

Following a concussion diagnosis, athletes, their parents/caregivers, coaches and teachers should follow Taekwondo Canada’s Return-To-Sport/School strategy, and the athlete must provide a signed Medical Clearance Letter to their coach before returning to full contact training or competition.

## How long will it take for the athlete to recover?

The signs and symptoms of a concussion usually last for one to four weeks, but may last longer. In some cases, it may take many weeks or months to heal. If the athlete has had a previous concussion, they may take longer to heal.

## As a referee, how can I help prevent concussion?

Referees can:

- Ensure all athletes wear the proper equipment and wear it correctly.
- Ensure all athletes respect the rules and participate in a fair and safe manner.
- Enforce the rules of taekwondo competition.
- Ensure athletes know to tell me, their coach, parent, or another adult they trust if they, or a teammate, experience any concussion symptoms after an impact.

## For more information about concussions:

- <https://taekwondo-canada.com/safesport/concussion/>
- <https://parachute.ca/concussion>



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