

UNDERSTANDING

CONCUSSION

A Guide for Parents of Rodeo Contestants

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The IDAHO HIGH SCHOOL RODEO ASSOCIATION and the IDAHO JUNIOR HIGH RODEO ASSOCIATION have adopted a concussion policy that, "Any contestant who sustains a biomechanical force (either directly to the head or to another part of the body that causes the head to accelerate/decelerate with sudden force) and who exhibits the signs, symptoms, or behaviors of concussion (as determined by an IHSRA or IJHRA Director and/or medical professional) can be disqualified from further participation in high school rodeo until he/she is evaluated by a licensed health care provider fluent in concussion evaluation and management (such as a physician, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or licensed athletic trainer) and obtains a written release to return to rodeo participation. Under no circumstances will any contestant who exhibits such signs, symptoms, or behaviors be allowed to continue to participate in rodeo the same day, regardless of medical clearance."



WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

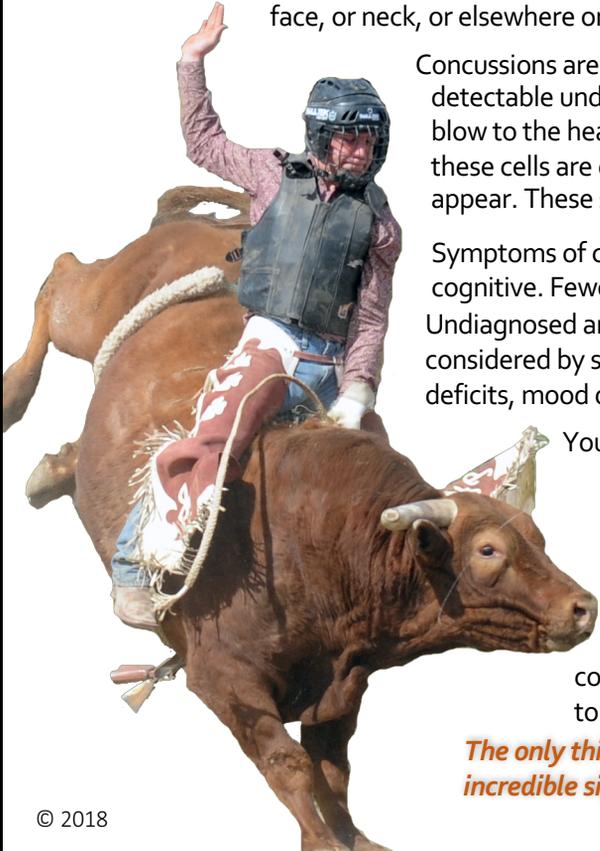
A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that is caused by either a direct blow to the head, face, or neck, or elsewhere on the body with an impulsive force transmitted to the head.

Concussions are serious injuries that affect the brain's cells, and they are not detectable under x-ray, CT-scan, or MRI. Even what appears to be a mild jolt or blow to the head or body may cause stretching and tearing of brain cells. When these cells are damaged, chemical changes inside the brain occur, and symptoms appear. These symptoms are indicative of impairment of normal brain function.

Symptoms of concussion can be physical, emotional, behavioral and/or cognitive. Fewer than 10% of concussions involve a loss of consciousness. Undiagnosed and improperly managed concussions, including those that be considered by some as *mild*, can lead to long-term concentration and memory deficits, mood disorders, depression, and personality changes.

Young athletes appear to be particularly susceptible to the effects of concussion. They are more likely than older athletes to experience profound effects from concussion, and they typically take longer to recover. Teenagers (and younger) also appear to be more prone to experience Second Impact Syndrome (SIS), a rare but potentially fatal condition that causes rapid swelling of the brain. SIS can occur if a person experiences a second concussion before the symptoms of the first concussion are allowed to fully heal.

The only thing we can do to cure concussion is to understand the injury's incredible significance by giving the brain adequate time to heal without exposing it to the risk of further injury.



CONCUSSION

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Idaho State University
Center for Sports Concussion

SYMPTOMS

Headache
"Pressure in head"
Neck pain
Nausea or vomiting
Dizziness
Blurred vision
Balance problems
Sensitivity to light
Sensitivity to noise
Feeling slowed down
Feeling like "in a fog"
"Don't feel right"
Difficulty concentrating
Difficulty remembering
Fatigue or low energy
Confusion
Drowsiness
More emotional than usual
Irritability
Sadness
Nervous or anxious
Sleep disturbances

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO RECOVER?

The recognition of concussion is especially critical for those working with younger athletes. Leading experts agree that kids under the age of 19 have a significantly greater risk of sustaining a concussion, and those concussions are taking longer to heal when compared to older-aged athletes. There are many potential reasons for this, but most scientists agree that the younger brain is more vulnerable because it is not fully developed. No matter the age, the key to concussion management is physical and cognitive rest until symptoms resolve followed by a **gradual** return to physical exertion. Typically, for these younger athletes, the process takes between several days to several weeks, although that timeline can vary. During the recovery period while the athlete is still symptomatic, it is important that parents emphasize physical and cognitive rest. Activities that require concentration and attention (e.g. reading, computers, video games, text messaging) may exacerbate symptoms and possibly delay recovery. Maintaining normal sleep schedules is also important as is a proper diet. No further intervention is required during the period of recovery unless symptoms worsen, and once symptoms resolve, the athlete is generally able to resume sport activity without any further problems.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY CHILD?

It takes a village to manage a concussion, and that village includes parents. The most important thing parents can do is understand that the injury your child has experienced and its symptoms are *real* and *significant*. Creating a culture of acceptance for the injury and supporting your child through his/her discomfort and frustration can help. Make sure your child gets plenty of food (lots of small meals work best) and liquids (especially water). Avoid spicy foods, as they tend to increase the metabolic rate in some people. It is OK to give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen to help with headaches. There is no need to interrupt sleep. Having them attend school is also okay, although your child may need frequent breaks. Hanging out with friends is also okay, but loud and busy environments (like concerts and basketball games) should be avoided. Finally, limit the amount of time your child spends texting and playing video games. If your child's condition worsens, he/she should be taken to the hospital immediately.

Your child should be symptom-free without the use of over-the-counter or prescription drugs before being allowed to return to any type of physical activity, including riding horses.

WHEN IN
DOUBT
SIT IT
OUT!



NEED HELP?

The **Portneuf Sports Medicine Institute** is the official medical provider of the Idaho High School Rodeo Association Finals and the Idaho Junior High Rodeo Finals. We are happy to provide free concussion consultations by phone. Free concussion testing also available in some areas.

(208) 239-1433

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