



CONCUSSION RECOGNITION, KNOW THE SIGNS!

A concussion should be suspected in any equestrian athlete who (1) experiences a possible mechanism of a head injury and (2) demonstrates ANY concussion-like signs and symptoms in any intensity or quantity following injury.

It is important that apparent concussions sustained by an athlete should be evaluated promptly by a healthcare professional with knowledge in concussion diagnosis. The athlete should not get back on a horse or cart if a concussion is suspected. In some cases, these same mechanisms of injury can cause a more serious head or spinal injury, which always warrants immediate emergency medical care. If an athlete demonstrates any of the following “Red Flags”, a more severe head or spinal injury should be suspected. Red Flags immediately following injury indicate that the athlete should remain in place until emergency personnel arrive at the scene for care. It is important to note that an athlete may also exhibit delayed Red Flags, where signs and symptoms occur in the first day or two after the initial injury and may indicate a more severe traumatic brain injury (TBI) or spinal injury that requires emergency medical attention.

Red Flags, Signs, and Symptoms May Include:

- Severe or worsening headache
- Weakness or numbness in arm(s) or leg(s)
- Nausea or vomiting
- Slurred speech
- Increasing confusion
- Neck pain or tenderness
- Loss (or partial loss) of vision or double vision
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up
- Seizure activity or convulsions
- Loss of consciousness or deteriorating awareness (going in and out of consciousness)
- Increasing agitation, combativeness, or change in behavior
- Visible deformity of the skull or helmet



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1: Mechanism of Injury

- Sustains direct, indirect or rotational impact or injury to the head, face, neck or body from a fall from a horse or driving cart or from a hit or blow to the body.
- Experiences whiplash effect injury, where the head forcibly moves forward & backward (or side to side) due to impact elsewhere on the body.
- Undergoes a jarring effect injury from the trunk up to the head and brain (such as a fall on the buttocks or side).

2: Signs and Symptoms

Signs of Concussion (Observable by others)

- Changes in behavior, thinking, physical functioning
- Slower processing speed, inability to complete tasks normally
- Unable to remember directions/instructions as usual
- Decreased balance and/or spatial awareness

Symptoms of Concussion (Reportable by injured athlete)

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Mental clouding, confusion, feeling slowed
- Visual problems
- Nausea, vomiting
- Tiredness
- Drowsiness, feeling “in a fog,” difficult to concentrate
- Pressure in the head
- Sensitivity to light or noise

