

A concussion is a type of brain injury that occurs when the brain moves quickly back and forth in the skull. Any blow to the head, face, neck or even to the body that jars the head, could cause a concussion. Concussions can happen to anyone in any type of work environment. In the Yukon, there are hundreds of accepted injury claims each year when workers are injured by equipment, falls or overexertion. Some of these workers may experience concussions. Most people recover entirely and are able to fully return to their work.

### What's the hazard?

A hazard is something that may expose a person to a risk of injury, including having a concussion. Below are some examples of hazards that could lead to concussions. Which could occur in your workplace? Are there any others?

Examples of workplace hazards that could contribute to concussions include:

- working with heavy tools or materials
- slippery surfaces
- falling objects
- rushing
- lack of focus
- fatigue
- cluttered walkways
- driving or being a passenger in a vehicle
- working at heights

### What are possible concussion symptoms?

Some symptoms may not be present right after the injury, but may appear in the following hours or days. These symptoms generally go away within a few days or weeks.

Concussion symptoms may include:

- loss of consciousness
- headache (or a sensation of pressure in your head)
- nausea or vomiting
- dizziness
- seeing stars or lights
- blurred or double vision
- slurred speech
- balance problems
- sensitivity to light and/or noise
- difficulty concentrating
- difficulty remembering
- confusion, drowsiness, and an incoherent thought process

To help recovery, these symptoms can usually be managed by taking regular breaks during activities, taking more time to get things done, doing one task at a time and having healthy sleep, nutrition and social habits.

Having one concussion increases the chances of having another. Future concussions can occur from less impact, take longer to heal and cause more severe symptoms.

### Talk leader instructions:

- This is background information ONLY.
- Be sure to customize to your organization.
- Consider printing copies of this sheet for yourself and each participant.
- Lead a discussion with your workers about the materials on this sheet.
- Be sure to give real life examples whenever possible. Be open to questions.
- Conclude with a brief review of the main points or a summary based on the discussion.
- Fill in the name of your organization, location and the date on your sheet. Have each worker sign your sheet to confirm their attendance.
- File your sheet in your worker records to document the Safety Talk.

## How should workers respond to a possible concussion?

Even if the person is not showing any symptoms following a head injury, they should immediately stop work, inform their supervisor and get medical attention. Prior to receiving medical attention, the injured worker should not be left alone or allowed to drive.

The injured worker should follow all medical advice, including any instructions to avoid physically or mentally demanding activities, driving or operating heavy machinery.

Most workers with concussions make quick and full recoveries. Injured workers, employers and medical professionals should work together to ensure an early and safe return-to-work. Lingering symptoms can often be taken care of by finding effective accommodations and monitoring the return-to-work plan.

## What can be done to prevent concussions in the workplace?

The most effective way to prevent concussions is to eliminate the risk of being exposed to a hazard. Personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect the head must be worn once all other methods of controlling the hazards, including elimination, substitution, engineering controls and administration controls, have been attempted.

Below are examples of steps that are required by law:

- employers must do hazard assessments and identify any hazards in their workplaces, including head injury hazards
- employers must have safe work procedures for identified hazards that cannot be eliminated
- employers must offer training to employees on safe work procedures
- employers must have procedures for reporting, investigating, and documenting incidents and injuries, and offer training to employees on those procedures
- employers must provide workers with properly fitting and appropriate personal protective equipment where required
- workers must wear appropriate safety headwear provided by their employer

There are many additional controls to help prevent concussions. Specific actions should be considered based on the hazard assessment in your workplace. Which of these would be important in your workplace? Are there others?

- remove tripping hazards
- use appropriate signage for wet surfaces
- organize shelves and storage to avoid falling objects
- place the heaviest objects on the floor or the lowest possible shelving
- wear the proper type of safety footwear to prevent falls
- use an appropriate step stool, access platform, or ladder to avoid falls

## Discussion questions:

1. What daily workplace activities do you do to prevent concussions?
2. What is your workplace's emergency plan in case of a possible concussion?

## More information:

If you have more questions or concerns about preventing concussions, please contact:

- Workers' Safety and Compensation Board, 867-667-5645 or 1-800-661-0443 or [work.safe@wcb.yk.ca](mailto:work.safe@wcb.yk.ca)

### Disclaimer

This resource has been prepared to help workplaces understand and comply with workplace health and safety laws. It is not legal advice and is not intended to replace the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act, S.Y. 2021, c.11* and *Workplace Health and Safety Regulations*.

Safety Talk record:

Print and complete this page or fill in electronically, then save as a record of your Safety Talk.

Comments/suggestions

Organization name

Safety Talk leader

Date

Safety Talk participants

print name

signature

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