

HEADS+UP

CONCUSSION IN HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

A FACT SHEET FOR **PARENTS**

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body. Even a "ding," "getting your bell rung," or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

What are the signs and symptoms?

You can't see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days after the injury. If your teen reports *one or more* symptoms of concussion listed below, or if you notice the symptoms yourself, keep your teen out of play and seek medical attention right away.

Signs Observed by Parents or Guardians	Symptoms Reported by Athlete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appears dazed or stunned • Is confused about assignment or position • Forgets an instruction • Is unsure of game, score, or opponent • Moves clumsily • Answers questions slowly • Loses consciousness (<i>even briefly</i>) • Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes • Can't recall events <i>prior</i> to hit or fall • Can't recall events <i>after</i> hit or fall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headache or "pressure" in head • Nausea or vomiting • Balance problems or dizziness • Double or blurry vision • Sensitivity to light or noise • Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy • Concentration or memory problems • Confusion • Just not "feeling right" or is "feeling down"

How can you help your teen prevent a concussion?

Every sport is different, but there are steps your teens can take to protect themselves from concussion and other injuries.

- Make sure they wear the right protective equipment for their activity. It should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.

- Ensure that they follow their coaches' rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.

What should you do if you think your teen has a concussion?

1. **Keep your teen out of play.** If your teen has a concussion, her/his brain needs time to heal. Don't let your teen return to play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says your teen is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in edema (brain swelling), permanent brain damage, and even death.
2. **Seek medical attention right away.** A health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your teen to return to sports.
3. **Teach your teen that it's not smart to play with a concussion.** Rest is key after a concussion. Sometimes athletes wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. Discourage others from pressuring injured athletes to play. Don't let your teen convince you that s/he's "just fine."
4. **Tell all of your teen's coaches and the student's school nurse about ANY concussion.** Coaches, school nurses, and other school staff should know if your teen has ever had a concussion. Your teen may need to limit activities while s/he is recovering from a concussion. Things such as studying, driving, working on a computer, playing video games, or exercising may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse. Talk to your health care professional, as well as your teen's coaches, school nurse, and teachers. If needed, they can help adjust your teen's school activities during her/his recovery.

If you think your teen has a concussion:

Don't assess it yourself. Take him/her out of play. Seek the advice of a health care professional.

It's better to miss one game than the whole season.

For more information and to order additional materials *free-of-charge*, visit: www.cdc.gov/Concussion.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION



CONCUSSION

A Must Read for Young Athletes

Let's Take Brain Injuries Out of Play

CONCUSSION FACTS

- A concussion is a brain injury that affects how your brain works.
- A concussion is caused by a blow to the head or body:
 - from contact with another player, hitting a hard surface such as the ground, ice, or court, or
 - being hit by a piece of equipment such as a lacrosse stick, hockey puck, or field hockey ball.
- A concussion can happen even if you haven't been knocked unconscious.
- If you think you have a concussion, you should not return to play on the day of the injury and until a health care professional says you are OK to return to play.

CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS

- Concussion symptoms differ with each person and with each injury, and may not be noticeable for hours or days. Common symptoms include:
 - Headache
 - Confusion
 - Difficulty remembering or paying attention
 - Balance problems or dizziness
 - Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
 - Feeling irritable, more emotional, or "down"
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Bothered by light or noise
 - Double or blurry vision
 - Slowed reaction time
 - Sleep problems
 - Loss of consciousness

During recovery, exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration (such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games) may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse.

WHY SHOULD I REPORT MY SYMPTOMS?

- Unlike with some other injuries, playing or practicing with concussion symptoms is dangerous and can lead to a longer recovery and a delay in your return to play.
- While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. Repeat concussions can increase the time it takes for you to recover and the likelihood of long term problems.
- In rare cases, repeat concussions in young athletes can result in brain swelling or permanent damage to your brain. They can even be fatal.

What Should I Do if I Think I Have a Concussion?

- DON'T HIDE IT, REPORT IT.** Ignoring your symptoms and trying to "tough it out" often makes symptoms worse. Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. Don't let anyone pressure you into continuing to practice or play with a concussion.
- GET CHECKED OUT.** Only a health care professional can tell if you have a concussion and when it's OK to return to play. Sports have injury timeouts and player substitutions so that you can get checked out and the team can perform at its best. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play.
- TAKE CARE OF YOUR BRAIN.** A concussion can affect your ability to do schoolwork and other activities. Most athletes with a concussion get better and return to sports, but it is important to rest and give your brain time to heal. A repeat concussion that occurs while your brain is still healing can cause long-term problems that may change your life forever.

All concussions are serious. *Don't hide it, report it. Take time to recover. It's better to miss one game than the whole season.*



For more information about concussion and other types of traumatic brain injuries, go to www.cdc.gov/Concussion
A part of CDC's Heads Up series