

A Concussion is a Brain Injury

Get the Facts

A concussion is a brain injury. Student athletes, parents and coaches of every school athletic team and every extracurricular athletic activity should be trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of brain injury, including concussions and second impact syndrome.

The Facts

- Most concussions occur without a loss of consciousness.
- Recognition and proper response to concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.
- Athletes who have ever had a concussion are at increased risk for another concussion.
- Children and teens are more likely to get a concussion and take longer to recover than adults.
- Lack of proper diagnosis and management of concussion may result in serious long-term consequences, or risk of coma or death.

What causes a concussion?

Concussions are caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head. A concussion can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head to move rapidly back and forth. They can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works. Even a “ding” or a bump on the head can be serious and result in a long-term or lifelong disability.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or can take days or weeks to appear and may include:

- Headache
- Vomiting
- Double or fuzzy vision
- Feeling groggy, foggy or sluggish
- Confusion
- Sadness
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Nausea
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Concentration or memory problems
- Irritability
- Nervousness or anxiety
- Trouble falling asleep

Immediate Medical Attention

Go to the Emergency Room or call your doctor if you or your child suddenly experience any of the following:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignments
- Forgets plays
- Is unsure of game, score, opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Can't recall events prior to or after a hit

Sports & Concussions

- For males, the leading cause of high school sports concussion is football; for females, the leading cause of high school sports concussion is soccer.
- Among children and youth ages 5-18 years, the five leading sports or recreational activities which account for concussions include bicycling, football, basketball, playground activities and soccer.
- A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short period of time (hours, days or weeks)—reportedly can result in brain swelling, permanent brain damage and even death. This condition is called second impact syndrome.

If an athlete is suspected of having sustained a concussion, implement the CDC's recommended 4-step action plan:

1. Remove the athlete from play. When in doubt, keep the athlete out of play.
2. Ensure the athlete is evaluated by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for a concussion.
3. Inform the athlete's parents or guardians about the possible concussion and give them a fact sheet on concussion.
4. Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for a concussion, says they are symptom-free and it's okay to return to play.

Recovery

- Get plenty of sleep at night, and rest during the day.
- Avoid physically demanding activities.
- Avoid mentally demanding activities.
- Do not use alcohol or recreational drugs.

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