

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

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

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 or weeks after the injury. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms yourself, seek medical attention right away.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?

Signs Observed by Parents or Guardians

If your child has experienced a bump or blow to the head during a game or practice, look for any of the following signs and symptoms of a concussion:

- 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 (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to hit or fall
- Can't recall events after hit or fall

Symptoms Reported by Athlete

- Headache or “pressure” in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not “feel right”

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD PREVENT A CONCUSSION?

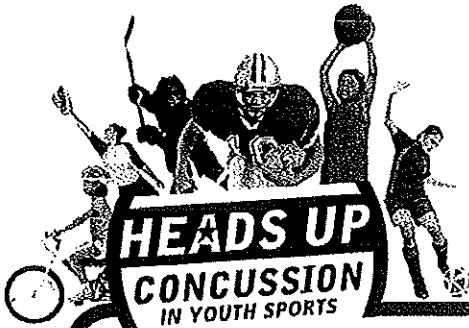
Every sport is different, but there are steps your children can take to protect themselves from concussion.

- Ensure that they follow their coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Make sure they wear the right protective equipment for their activity (such as helmets, padding, shin guards, and eye and mouth guards). Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of a concussion.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD HAS A CONCUSSION?

- 1. Seek medical attention right away.** A health care professional will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child to return to sports.
- 2. Keep your child out of play.** Concussions take time to heal. Don't let your child return to play until a health care professional says it's OK. Children who return to play too soon—while the brain is still healing—risk a greater chance of having a second concussion. Second or later concussions can be very serious. They can cause permanent brain damage, affecting your child for a lifetime.
- 3. Tell your child's coach about any recent concussion.** Coaches should know if your child had a recent concussion in ANY sport. Your child's coach may not know about a concussion your child received in another sport or activity unless you tell the coach.

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



A Fact Sheet for **ATHLETES**

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that:

- Is caused by a bump or blow to the head
- Can change the way your brain normally works
- Can occur during practices or games in any sport
- Can happen even if you haven't been knocked out
- Can be serious even if you've just been "dinged"

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Bothered by light
- Bothered by noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Difficulty paying attention
- Memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right"

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

- **Tell your coaches and your parents.** Never ignore a bump or blow to the head even if you feel fine. Also, tell your coach if one of your teammates might have a concussion.

- **Get a medical check up.** A doctor or health care professional can tell you if you have a concussion and when you are OK to return to play.
- **Give yourself time to get better.** If you have had a concussion, your brain needs time to heal. While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have a second concussion. Second or later concussions can cause damage to your brain. It is important to rest until you get approval from a doctor or health care professional to return to play.

HOW CAN I PREVENT A CONCUSSION?

Every sport is different, but there are steps you can take to protect yourself.

- Follow your coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Use the proper sports equipment, including personal protective equipment (such as helmets, padding, shin guards, and eye and mouth guards). In order for equipment to protect you, it must be:

- > The right equipment for the game, position, or activity
- > Worn correctly and fit well
- > Used every time you play

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