

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that changes the way the brain normally works. A concussion is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. 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 OF A CONCUSSION?

Signs and symptoms of a concussion can show up right after the injury or may appear days or weeks after the injury. If an athlete reports one or more symptoms of concussions listed below after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, they should be kept out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating concussions, says they are symptom-free and they are OK to return to play.

SIGNS OBSERVED BY THE COACHING STAFF:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about position or assignment
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes
- Cannot recall events prior to hit or fall
- Cannot recall events after hit or fall

SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY THE ATHLETE:

- Headaches or “pressure” in the head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Just not “feeling right” or “feeling down”

CONCUSSION DANGER SIGNS

In rare cases, a dangerous blood clot may form on the brain in a person with a concussion and crowd the brain against the skull. An athlete should receive immediate medical attention if after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body they exhibit any of the following danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other
- Convulsions, seizures, or unusual behavior
- Is drowsy or cannot be awakened

- Cannot recognize people or places
- A headache that gets worse or slurred speech
- Becomes increasingly confused or agitated
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Loses consciousness for any amount of time
- Repeated vomiting or nausea

WHY SHOULD AN ATHLETE REPORT THEIR SYMPTOMS?

If an athlete has a concussion, his/her brain needs time to heal. While an athlete's brain is healing, they are much more likely to have another concussion. Repeat concussions can increase the time it takes to recover. In rare cases, repeat concussions in young athletes can result in brain swelling or permanent damage to their brain. It can even be fatal.

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

If you suspect that an athlete has a concussion, remove them from play and seek medical attention. Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Keep the athlete out of play until a medical professional says they are symptom free and are OK to return to play. Rest is the key to help an athlete recover. Exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration (studying, computers, video games, etc.) may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or worsen. After a concussion, returning to sports and school is a gradual process that should be carefully managed and monitored by a health care professional.

This information was reformatted from the Center of Disease Control's Heads Up Concussion in Youth Sports Program. More information can be found at: www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/youth.htm