

## **A FACT SHEET FOR PARENTS**

### **What is a concussion?**

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury—or TBI— caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or by a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. This fast movement can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, creating chemical changes in the brain and sometimes stretching and damaging the brain cells

### **What are the signs and symptoms?**

Concussion signs and symptoms can appear immediately or not be noticed until days or even weeks after the injury. If your teen reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms yourself, seek medical attention right away.

### **Talk with your children and teens about concussion.**

Tell them to report their concussion symptoms to you and their coach right away. Some children and teens think concussions aren't serious, or worry that if they report a concussion they will lose their position on the team or look weak. Be sure to remind them that it's better to miss one game than the whole season.

### **Signs Observed by Parents or Guardians**

Children and teens who show or report one or more of the signs and symptoms listed below—or simply say they just “don't feel right” after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body—may have a concussion or other serious brain injury.

#### Signs Observed by Parents or Coaches

- Appears dazed or stunned
  - Forgets an instruction, is confused about an assignment or position, or is unsure of the game, score, or opponent
  - Moves clumsily
  - Answers questions slowly
  - Loses consciousness (even briefly)
  - Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes
  - Can't recall events prior to or after a hit or fall
- #### Symptoms Reported by Children and Teens
- Headache or “pressure” in head
  - Nausea or vomiting
  - Balance problems or dizziness, or double or blurry vision
  - Bothered by light or noise
  - Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
  - Confusion, or concentration or memory problems
  - Just not “feeling right,” or “feeling down”

## What Are Some More Serious Danger Signs to Look Out For?

In rare cases, a dangerous collection of blood (hematoma) may form on the brain after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body and can squeeze the brain against the skull. Call 9-1-1 or take your child or teen to the emergency department right away if, after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, he or she has one or more of these danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions or seizures (shaking or twitching)
- Unusual behavior, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation
- Loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out). **Even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously**

## CONCUSSIONS AFFECT EACH ATHLETE DIFFERENTLY.

While most children and teens with a concussion feel better within a couple of weeks, some will have symptoms for months or longer. Talk with your children's or teens' healthcare provider if their concussion symptoms do not go away, or if they get worse after they return to their regular activities.

## What should you do if you think your athlete has a concussion?

As a parent, if you think your child or teen may have a concussion, you should:

1. Remove your child or teen from play.
2. Keep your child or teen out of play the day of the injury. Your child or teen should be seen by a healthcare provider (athletic trainer, physician etc) and only return to play with permission from a healthcare provider who is experienced in evaluating for concussion
3. Ask your child's or teen's healthcare provider for written instructions on helping your child or teen return to school. You can give the instructions to your child's or teen's school nurse and teacher(s) and return-to-play instructions to the coach and/or athletic trainer

Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Only a healthcare provider should assess a child or teen for a possible concussion. Concussion signs and symptoms often show up soon after the injury. But you may not know how serious the concussion is at first, and some symptoms may not show up for hours or days. The brain needs time to heal after a concussion. A child's or teen's return to school and sports should be a gradual process that is carefully managed and monitored by a healthcare provider.

**Children and teens who continue to play while having concussion symptoms, or who return to play too soon—while the brain is still healing—have a greater chance of getting another**

concussion. A repeat concussion that occurs while the brain is still healing from the first injury can be very serious, and can affect a child or teen for a lifetime. It can even be fatal.

To learn more, go to [cdc.gov/HEADSUP](https://www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP)



revised 2019