

# HEADS+UP

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

### 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 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 child has a concussion?

- 1. Keep your child out of play.** If your child has a concussion, her/his brain needs time to heal. Don't let your child return to play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says your child 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 child to return to sports.
- 3. Teach your child 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 child convince you that s/he's “just fine.”
- 4. Tell all of your child's coaches about ANY concussion.** Coaches should know if your child has ever had a concussion. Your child may need to limit activities while s/he is recovering from a concussion. Things such as studying, 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 child's coaches and teachers. If needed they can help adjust your child's school activities during her/his recovery.

#### If you think your child 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](http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion).

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

