

A Fact Sheet for PARENTS

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a type of traumatic 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 mood, behavior, or personality changes

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
- Just “not feeling right” or “feeling down”

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD PREVENT A CONCUSSION OR OTHER SERIOUS BRAIN INJURY?

- 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. Protective equipment should fit properly and be well maintained.
- Wearing a helmet is a must to reduce the risk of a serious brain injury or skull fracture.
 - However, helmets are not designed to prevent concussions. There is no “concussion-proof” helmet. So, even with a helmet, it is important for kids and teens to avoid hits to the head.

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 regular activities, including sports.

2. KEEP YOUR CHILD OUT OF PLAY.

Concussions take time to heal. Don’t let your child return to play the day of the injury and 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 repeat concussion. Repeat 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 PREVIOUS CONCUSSION.

Coaches should know if your child had a previous concussion. 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.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/Concussion.

CONCUSSION

A Must Read for Young Athletes

Let's Take Brain Injuries Out of Play

CONCUSSION FACTS

- A concussion is a brain injury that affects how your brain works.
- A concussion is caused by a blow to the head or body:
 - from contact with another player, hitting a hard surface such as the ground, ice, or court, or
 - being hit by a piece of equipment such as a lacrosse stick, hockey puck, or field hockey ball.
- A concussion can happen even if you haven't been knocked unconscious.
- If you think you have a concussion, you should not return to play on the day of the injury and until a health care professional says you are OK to return to play.

CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS

- Concussion symptoms differ with each person and with each injury, and may not be noticeable for hours or days. Common symptoms include:
 - Headache
 - Confusion
 - Difficulty remembering or paying attention
 - Balance problems or dizziness
 - Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
 - Feeling irritable, more emotional, or "down"
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Bothered by light or noise
 - Double or blurry vision
 - Slowed reaction time
 - Sleep problems
 - Loss of consciousness

During recovery, exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration (such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games) may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse.

WHY SHOULD I REPORT MY SYMPTOMS?

- Unlike with some other injuries, playing or practicing with concussion symptoms is dangerous and can lead to a longer recovery and a delay in your return to play.
- While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. Repeat concussions can increase the time it takes for you to recover and the likelihood of long term problems.
- In rare cases, repeat concussions in young athletes can result in brain swelling or permanent damage to your brain. They can even be fatal.

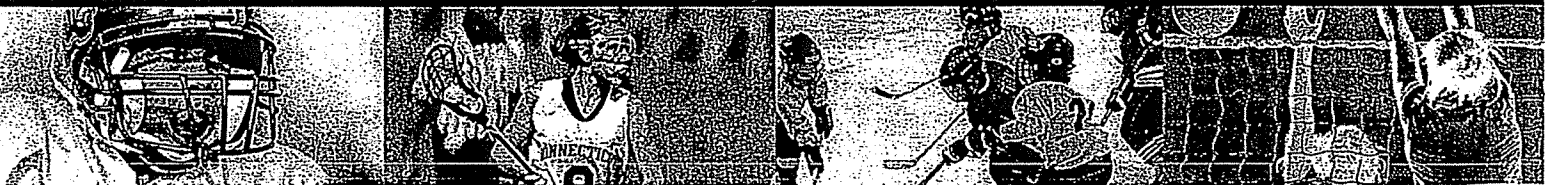
What Should I Do if I Think I Have a Concussion?

DON'T HIDE IT, REPORT IT: Ignoring your symptoms and trying to "tough it out" often makes symptoms worse. Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. Don't let anyone pressure you into continuing to practice or play with a concussion.

GET CHECKED OUT: Only a health care professional can tell if you have a concussion, and when it's OK to return to play. Sports have injury timeouts and player substitutions so that you can get checked out and the team can perform at its best. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR BRAIN: A concussion can affect your ability to do schoolwork and other activities. Most athletes with a concussion get better and return to sports, but it is important to rest and give your brain time to heal. A repeat concussion that occurs while your brain is still healing can cause long-term problems that may change your life forever.

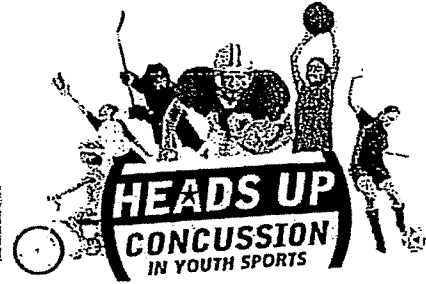
All concussions are serious. Don't hide it, report it. Take time to recover. It's better to miss one game than the whole season.



*For more information about concussion and other types of traumatic brain injuries, go to

www.cdc.gov/Concussion

A part of CDC's Heads Up series



FAQs about Baseline Testing among Young Athletes

To help answer some common questions about baseline testing among young athletes, CDC has compiled a list of frequently asked questions to help you, your school, or your league prepare for concussions both pre- and post-season.

What is baseline testing?

Baseline testing is a pre-season exam conducted by a trained health care professional. Baseline tests are used to help assess an athlete's balance and brain function (including learning and memory skills, ability to pay attention or concentrate, and how quickly he or she thinks and solve problems), as well for the presence of any concussion symptoms. Results from baseline tests (or pre-injury tests) can be used and compared to a similar exam conducted by a health care professional during the season if an athlete has a suspected concussion.

Baseline testing should take place during the pre-season—ideally prior to the first practice. It is important to note that some baseline and concussion assessment tools are only suggested for use among athletes ages 10 years and older.

How is baseline testing information used if an athlete has a suspected concussion?

Results from baseline testing can be used if an athlete has a suspected concussion. Comparing post-injury test results to baseline test results can assist health care professionals in identifying the effects of the injury and making more informed return to school and play decisions.

Education should always be provided to athletes and parents if an athlete has a suspected concussion. This should include information on safely returning to school and play, tips to aid in recovery (such as rest), dangers signs and when to seek immediate care, and how to help reduce an athlete's risk for a future concussion.

What should be included as part of baseline testing?

Baseline testing should include a check for concussion symptoms, as well as balance and cognitive (such as concentration and memory) assessments. Computerized or paper-pencil neuropsychological tests may be included as a piece of an overall baseline test to assess an athlete's concentration, memory, and reaction time.

During the baseline pre-season test, health care professionals should also assess for a prior history of concussion (including symptoms experienced and length of recovery from the injury). It is also important to record other medical conditions that could impact recovery after concussion, such as a history of migraines, depression, mood disorders, or anxiety, as well as learning disabilities and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. Baseline testing also provides an important opportunity to educate athletes and others about concussion and return to school and play protocols.

Who should interpret baseline tests?

Only a trained health care professional with experience in concussion management should interpret the results of baseline exam. When possible, ideally a neuropsychologist should interpret the computerized or paper-pencil neuropsychological test components of a baseline exam. Results of neuropsychological tests should not be used as a stand-alone diagnostic tool, but should serve as one component used to make return to school and play decisions.

How often should an athlete undergo baseline testing?

It is recommended that most components of baseline testing be repeated annually to establish a valid test result for comparison. Baseline computerized or paper-pencil neuropsychological tests may be repeated every 2 years. However more frequent neuropsychological testing may be needed if an athlete has sustained a concussion or if the athlete has a medical condition that could affect results of the the test.

Who should administer baseline tests?

Baseline tests should only be conducted by a trained health care professional.

Resources for coaches and parents: visit www.cdc.gov/concussion

