

## A Parents' Guide to Concussion in Sports

*What is a concussion?* It is a brain injury that results in a temporary disruption of normal brain function. This usually occurs when the brain is violently rocked back and forth or twisted inside the skull as a result of a blow to the head.

*What are the signs and symptoms of a concussion?* See chart below

Observable Signs	Symptoms reports by athlete
Appears dazed and stunned	Headache
Confused	Nausea
Forgetful	Balance problems/dizziness
Unsure of score or opponent	Double or fuzzy vision
Moves clumsily	Sensitivity to light or noise
Answers questions slowly	Feels sluggish
Loses consciousness	Feeling groggy
Behavioral or personality changes	Concentration or memory problems
Can't recall events prior to injury or after injury	confusion

*What to do if a concussion is suspected?* Athlete should immediately be removed from the game or practice. Parents and coaches are not expected to diagnose a concussion. Leave this to medical professionals. Do be aware of the signs and symptoms listed above. Every athlete, if concussion is suspected, should be evaluated by a health care professional. If your child is vomiting or having trouble staying awake, he or she should be taken to the emergency room immediately.

*When can an athlete return to play?* No athlete should return to play the same day as a suspected concussion. All athletes must be cleared by an appropriate health-care professional before he or she are allowed to return to play in games or practices.

*How does an athlete work his or her way back into participating?* Step 1-light exercise; Step 2-running with no helmet, etc.; Step 3-non contact training drills; Step 4-full contact in practice; Step 5-Game play

**If symptoms occur at any step, the athlete should cease activity and be re-evaluated by their health care provider.**

Do's	Don'ts
Recognize symptoms	make concussion diagnoses
Tell coaches if symptoms occur	Ignore symptoms
Tell coaches if a teammate has symptoms	Ignore a teammate's concerns
Inspect equipment for safety and fit	Use broken or outdated equipment
Ask teachers to monitor changes in behavior	Ignore changes in class work and/or behavior
Report concussions to other staff members	Ignore concussion symptoms of athletes that move on to another sport

### FAQ's

*Is a CAT scan needed?* A CAT scan or an MRI is rarely needed following a concussion. Rather, a concussion is diagnosed based on the athlete's story of the injury and a health care provider's physical examination.

*What is the best treatment for a quick recovery?* The best treatment is rest. No medication can speed the recovery. Avoiding all loud noises, bright lights, video games, television, texting, phones, etc. These activities may all worsen the symptoms.

*How long do symptoms usually last?* The symptoms will usually go away in one week, but plan on your child being out for about two weeks. Long-term symptoms may last several weeks or months in which case need for careful management of the concussion is necessary.

*How many concussions can an athlete have before he or she should stop playing sports?* There is no magic number before an athlete should give up playing. The circumstances surrounding each injury are unique. A decision is best reached following a complete evaluation by your child's primary care provider.

*Is there a risk for long-term brain damage for high school athletes?* It is important to be very careful to manage each concussion properly. Very little is known about long-term effects of concussions at the high school level.