

## 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.