



How to Prevent and Know Signs of Concussions

Chances are if you are an athlete, or have a child athlete, you have been hearing a lot about concussions in the news and from school officials. We are now becoming more aware of how repeat head injuries as youths can affect us for years to come and why we need to take any possible concussion seriously.

While football is the leading cause of concussions, concussions from girls soccer are rapidly on the rise. Hockey, cheerleading, wrestling, lacrosse, and basketball also have high concussion rates. Whatever the sport, it is important to recognize the early signs and symptoms of a concussion and use precaution to prevent a head injury in the first place.

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that can change the way your brain normally works. A concussion can also occur from a fall or blow to the body that causes the head and the brain to move quickly back and forth. This may or may not be associated with loss of consciousness (or blacking out).

What are a few of the signs and symptoms of a concussion?

- Any change in behavior or functioning after a forceful blow to the head or the body
- Confusion or the inability to remember instructions; unable to recall events prior or after the injury
- Loss of consciousness
- Headache/neck pain or head pressure
- Slow or slurred speech
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Vomiting, nausea, or sensitivity or light or noise
- Vision changes
- Numbness, tingling



If an athlete experiences these signs or symptoms, he/she should be removed from the sport and evaluated right away. The athlete should not participate until being symptom-free and having been cleared by the physician to return to the sport. Most programs in contact sports have baseline testing that can determine if there are any changes in the responses after a head injury.

Prevention is the key. Safety should always come first in any sporting event. Repeat concussions can lead to a slow recovery and increase the risk for long-term damage. Proper equipment and supervised strength training (especially strengthening neck muscles) can help decrease the chances of an injury. Always play with good sportsmanship in mind.

If a student-athlete believes he/she has suffered from a concussion, it is important to tell a trainer or coach right away. Being evaluated and cleared by a medical professional is another important part of preventing further injury.

For further information on this topic, please contact your nearest School-Based Health Center provider.

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We look forward to seeing your family!

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