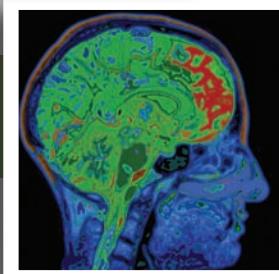


# CONCUSSIONS

## *IN SPORTS*



Understanding  
Brain Injuries

## What is a concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a blow to the head. This type of brain injury can be common in athletes who play sports, or people who participate in recreational activities. It is also possible to get a concussion from a blow to the body if it causes sudden head movement. You cannot see a concussion, so many of them are not treated or reported to a doctor. Signs and symptoms may show right away, or may not be noticed until days or weeks after the injury.

## What are common signs/symptoms?

SIGNS OBSERVED BY PARENT	SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE
Appears dazed	Headache or “pressure” in the head
Noticeable balance problems	Nausea
Answers questions slowly	Dizziness
Frequent sleep interruptions	Problems remembering or concentrating
Changes in mood or behavior	Sensitive to light or noise

## When do I seek medical attention?

You should contact your family physician if any of the above signs or symptoms are noticed following a head injury. If the symptoms are severe, getting worse over time, or if you have specific concerns, you should transport the injured person to an emergency room. It is particularly concerning if the person cannot be awakened, is having convulsions or seizures, or cannot recognize people or places.

The physician will want information from people who were present when the injury occurred. The physician may test strength, senses, balance, reflexes, and memory. In more serious cases, the physician may want specific medical tests completed, such as a computed tomographic (CT) scan to look for more severe injuries.

## How are concussions treated?

The best way to treat a concussion is to get some rest from physical and mental activities. Television, computers, and music should be limited, or even stopped if they worsen symptoms. You should get plenty of fluids and have general healthy behaviors, such as eating well and getting enough sleep. If symptoms become worse, or you experience changes in behavior—anxiety, grogginess, or confusion—you should immediately see a physician.

## Preventing Concussions

Ways to minimize the risk of suffering a concussion include:

- *Playing by the rules and practicing good sportsmanship.* By following the rules of the sport, and listening to coaches, athletes can limit harmful actions on the field or court.
- *Before games, check the playing area or practice field for hazards.* Make sure items that are part of the field are safe, such as enough padding for football goal posts, or doing cheerleading stunts with adequate padding.
- *Learning and using proper technique for your sport.* Learning how to play your sport properly can minimize risks. Many sports-related organizations offer programs to help young athletes learn the right techniques. (For example, the National Football League's youth development arm, USA Football, operates a program called Heads Up Football®, which teaches players to keep their heads up and lead with their shoulders when tackling.)
- *Using the right protective equipment for your sport.* A coach or trainer can tell you what equipment is needed to play the sport. Protective equipment should fit properly and be well maintained. Helmets help reduce the risk of a brain injury, but will not prevent a concussion. There are no “concussion-proof” helmets.



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### 3 steps to take if you think a child has a concussion

1. **Seek medical attention** – Check with a family physician to determine the seriousness of a brain injury.
2. **Keep the child out of play** – Brain injuries take time to heal. Check with a family physician, who can decide when it's safe to return to sports activity.
3. **Inform coaches** – If a child had a recent brain injury, coaches and parents should be informed.

**NEVER ignore  
A HEAD INJURY.**  
**When there's  
DOUBT  
sit the athlete out.**