Concussion
FACT SHEET

CDC HEADS UP
SAFE BRAIN. STRONGER FUTURE.

This guide helps you protect children and teens from concussion and other serious brain injuries. Keep it at games and practices to recognize a possible concussion and know how to respond.

What Does Concussion Mean?

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury, or TBI. It can follow a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or a body hit that rapidly moves the head and brain back and forth. The brain may bounce or twist inside the skull, causing chemical changes and sometimes stretching and harming brain cells.

How Can I Protect My Children or Teens?

Sports help children and teens stay healthy and can support success in school. To reduce their risk of concussion or other serious brain injury:

- Help make team safety a priority.
  - Work with the coach to teach ways to lower concussion risk.
  - Discuss concussion with your children or teens. Ask about worries over reporting one, and talk through those concerns. Stress the need to report concussions and allow time for recovery.
  - Make sure they follow the coach's safety rules and the sport's rules.
  - Expect good sportsmanship from your children or teens at all times.
- Teach them to wear a helmet when the sport or activity calls for one. Helmets reduce the risk of the most serious head or brain injuries, but none is "concussion-proof." Children and teens must still avoid hits to the head.

Think ahead. What should your child or teen understand about concussion?

How Can I Recognize a Concussion?

After a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, children and teens with any sign or symptom below, or who simply feel unwell, may have a concussion or another serious brain injury.

Signs Parents or Coaches Might Notice

- Looks dazed or stunned
- Forgets directions, is confused about an assignment or position, or is unsure of the game, score, or opponent
- Moves awkwardly
- Responds to questions slowly
- Passes out, even briefly
- Has changes in mood, behavior, or personality
- Cannot recall events before or after a hit or fall

Symptoms Children or Teens Might Report

- Head pain or pressure in the head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Poor balance, dizziness, or double or blurred vision
- Sensitivity to light or sound
- Feeling slow, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Confusion or trouble focusing or remembering
- Feeling unwell or low in mood

Discuss concussion with children and teens. Ask them to tell you and their coach about symptoms immediately. Some think concussion is not serious; others fear losing their team position or seeming weak. Remind them that missing one game is better than missing the entire season.

CONCUSSION AFFECTS EVERY CHILD AND TEEN DIFFERENTLY.

Most children and teens feel better within a couple of weeks after a concussion, but symptoms can last months or longer. Contact their healthcare provider if symptoms persist or worsen after regular activities resume.

Which Serious Warning Signs Should I Watch For?

Rarely, blood can build up on the brain (a hematoma) after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, pressing the brain against the skull. Call 9-1-1 or take your child or teen to the emergency department immediately if any of these warning signs follows such an injury:

- One pupil is bigger than the other
- Drowsiness or inability to wake
- A worsening headache that will not go away
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or poor coordination
- Nausea or repeated vomiting, convulsions or seizures with shaking or twitching
- Unusual behavior, more confusion, restlessness, or agitation
- Passing out or being knocked unconscious. Take even a brief loss of consciousness seriously

Children and teens who play with concussion symptoms or return before their brain has healed are more likely to have another concussion. A repeat injury while the brain is recovering can be very serious, cause lifelong effects, and even be fatal.

What If My Child or Teen May Have a Concussion?

If you suspect your child or teen has a concussion, take these steps:

1. Take your child or teen out of play.
2. Keep them out for the rest of the injury day. Have a healthcare provider assess them. Return to play requires permission from a provider experienced in concussion evaluation.
3. Get written school-return instructions from your child's or teen's healthcare provider. Share them with the school nurse and teachers. Give return-to-play instructions to the coach and/or athletic trainer.

Do not assess the injury's severity yourself. A healthcare provider must evaluate a possible concussion. Signs and symptoms often appear soon after injury, but its seriousness may be unclear at first. Some symptoms take hours or days to appear.

The brain needs time to recover. Returning to school and sports should be gradual, with careful management and monitoring by a healthcare provider.

Learn more at cdc.gov/HEADSUP

CDC HEADS UP

Discuss concussion and other serious brain injury risks with your child or teen, then have each person sign below.

Detach the section below. Keep this guide at your children's or teens' games and practices to help protect them from concussion and other serious brain injuries.

☐ I learned about concussion and discussed with my parent or coach what to do if I have a concussion or another serious brain injury.

Athlete's printed name:_____ Date:_____

Athlete's signature:_____

☐ I reviewed this concussion fact sheet with my child or teen and discussed what to do if they have a concussion or another serious brain injury.

Parent/legal guardian's printed name:_____ Date:_____

Parent/legal guardian's signature:_____

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