

MIND MATTERS: CONCUSSION CARE FOR STUDENT ATHLETES

A quick guide for coaches and trainers

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a type of brain injury caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head—or body—that causes the brain to move back and forth inside the skull. Even a mild injury can affect how children and teens think, feel, and act.



KNOW THE SIGNS

Physical

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Blurry or double vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise

Cognitive

- Confusion
- Trouble remembering or concentrating
- Slower thinking or speaking
- Feeling foggy or sluggish

Emotional

- Irritability
- Mood changes
- Anxiety or sadness

Sleep

- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Trouble falling asleep



It takes kids and teens 2-4 weeks to fully recover.

WHY ATHLETES MAY NOT SPEAK UP

Many young athletes don't report concussion symptoms because they:

- Don't realize they're injured
- Want to stay in the game
- Fear losing their spot or letting the team down
- Feel pressure from peers or adults
- Think the symptoms "aren't that bad"

WHAT COACHES CAN DO

- Foster a culture where safety comes first
- Encourage honesty over toughness
- Praise athletes for reporting symptoms
- Watch closely for signs—even when they say they're "fine"

When in doubt, sit them out!

CONCUSSIONS IN SPORTS



Concussions can occur from:

- A blow to the head (ball, fall, or collision)
- A hit to the body that causes the head to whip or snap
- Falls to the ground during contact or rough play
- Helmet-to-helmet hits or elbow contact
- Heading a ball improperly (in sports like soccer)

Most concussions don't involve a loss of consciousness—if something seems off, assume a possible injury.

IMMEDIATE ACTION STEPS

- **Remove the athlete from play immediately.** Even a possible concussion means the athlete must sit out—no exceptions. Continuing to play puts them at serious risk for a more severe injury.
- **Do not allow return to play the same day.**
- **Notify parents or guardians as soon as possible.** Explain what happened, what symptoms were observed, and encourage them to seek medical evaluation from a provider trained in concussion care.
- **Follow your school or organization's reporting protocol** and alert school health staff or athletic trainers so they can monitor recovery and help coordinate return-to-play steps.

RETURNING TO PLAY

- Athletes should be cleared by a healthcare provider before returning to play.
- Once cleared, use a step-by-step approach to resume activity gradually:



- Light aerobic activity
- Moderate exercise
- Non-contact practice
- Full-contact practice
- Full return to play

If symptoms return at any step, stop and rest before trying again.



**Brain Injury
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