

What is a Concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury, or TBI, caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that can change the way your brain normally works. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head to move rapidly back and forth. Even a "ding," "getting your bell rung," or what seems to be mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

Concussions can occur in any sport or recreation activity. So, all coaches, parents, and athletes need to learn concussion signs and symptoms and what to do if a concussion occurs.

Fast Facts

- A concussion is a brain injury and all are serious.
- Recognition and proper response to concussions when they first occur can help prevent further.
- Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness.
- Recognition and proper response to concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.

Recognizing a Possible Concussion

To help recognize a concussion, you should watch for the following two things among your athletes:

- A forceful bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head.
- Any change in the athlete's behavior, thinking, or physical functioning.

Athletes who experience any of the signs and symptoms listed below after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body should be kept out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says they are symptom-free and it's OK to return to play.



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Information provided by the
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/concussion

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Sports Concussion

Information for Athletes, Parents & Coaches



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Signs & Symptoms

Signs Observed by Coaching Staff

Appears dazed or stunned
Is confused about assignment or position
Forgets an instruction
Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
Moves clumsily
Answers questions slowly
Loses consciousness (even briefly)
Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes
Can't recall events prior to hit or fall
Can't recall events after hit or fall

Symptoms Reported by Athlete

Headache or "pressure" in head
Nausea or vomiting
Balance problems or dizziness
Double or blurry vision
Sensitivity to light
Sensitivity to noise
Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
Concentration or memory problems
Confusion
Does not "feel right" or is "feeling down"

Remember, you can't see a concussion and some athletes may not experience and/or report symptoms until hours or days after the injury. Most people with a concussion will recover quickly and fully. However, for some people, signs and symptoms of concussion can last for days, weeks or longer.

Concussion Action Plan

If you suspect that an athlete has a concussion, implement your 4-step action plan:

- 1.** Remove the athlete from play. Look for signs and symptoms of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head or body. When in doubt, keep the athlete out of play.
- 2.** Ensure that the athlete is evaluated by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion. Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care professionals have a number of methods that they can use to assess the severity of concussions. As a coach, recording the following information can help health care professionals in assessing the athlete after the injury:
 - Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head or body
 - Any loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) and if so, for how long
 - Any memory loss immediately following the injury
 - Any seizures immediately following the injury
 - Number of previous concussions (if any)
- 3.** Inform the athlete's parents or guardians about the possible concussion and give them the fact sheet on concussion. Make sure they know that the athlete should be seen by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion.
- 4.** Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says they are symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first - usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks) - can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in edema (brain swelling), permanent brain damage, and even death.

Prevention & Preparation

Safety First

- Teach athletes safe playing techniques and encourage them to follow the rules of play.
- Encourage athletes to practice good sportsmanship at all times
- Make sure that athletes wear the correct protective equipment for their activity (helmets, padding, shin guards and eye and mouth guards). Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.
- Review the athlete fact sheet with your team to help them recognize the signs and symptoms of a concussion.

Do NOT Play with a Concussion

Sometimes players and parents wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. Athletes should not be allowed to continue playing after they have sustained a bump or blow to the head.

A repeat concussion occurs before the brain recovers from the last - usually within a short period of time (hours, days or weeks - can slow recovery and increase the likelihood of having long-term or permanent problems. With repeat concussions, when signs and symptoms, a blow to the head can result in brain swelling, permanent brain damage and even death. This more serious condition is called Second Impact Syndrome.

Keep athletes with known or suspected concussions from play, practice or training until they have been evaluated and given permission to return to play by a healthcare professional with experience in evaluating and managing concussions.

For more information, call the Tahoe Center for Orthopedics or visit LakeTahoeSportsMed.com.