



Concussions: Information and education for parents

What exactly is a concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury. It can occur even from a mild bump or blow to the head and have serious consequences.

You cannot see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of a concussion can show up right after the injury but more commonly shows in the first 48-72 hours.

Concussions do not occur only in sports. Other causes for concussion are falls and motor vehicle accidents or a “whiplash” type injury. Blows to the head have an accumulative effect. If your family member has been in previous motor vehicle accidents and sustains a blow to the head in sports, the chances of suffering a concussion are greater.

What are symptoms of a concussion?

- Headache or pressure in the head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish or groggy
- Decreased concentration or memory
- Confusion

What are the signs observed with a concussion?

- Forgetful
- Clumsy
- Appears stunned or dazed
- Loses consciousness
- Confused
- Answers questions slowly

Danger signs that are more serious and need immediate medical attention

- One pupil larger than the other
- Drowsiness or cannot be awakened
- Headache that gets worse and will not go away
- Slurred speech
- Repeated vomiting, convulsions or seizure
- Increasing confusion, restlessness or agitation
- Loss of consciousness



Teens

Teens that continue to play with symptoms have a greater chance to have a second concussion. A repeated concussion while the brain is still trying to heal can be very serious with lifetime consequences or even fatality.



Preschool and Elementary

Concussions occur in preschoolers and young children as well. Issues for the younger child can be seen in behavior outbursts, not being able to sit still in class or circle time, being a bully, temper tantrums, or being overly distracted.

How you can help as a parent:

What to do if you suspect your child has suffered from a concussion?

- Seek medical attention right away – A healthcare professional can decide how serious a concussion is and when to return to play
- Keep your child out of play – Concussions take time to heal. Do not return to play until a healthcare professional says it is time
- Tell your child's coach about any previous concussions that have occurred – Your child's coach should know about a previous concussion. The coach may not know about a previous incident in another sport

How can you help prevent a concussion from occurring?

- Ensure that they follow the rules of the sport and the coach's rules of safety
- Practice good sportsmanship
- Wear right protective gear and make sure it fits properly
- Wear a helmet – remember helmets are not designed to prevent a concussion and there is no "concussion proof" helmet



How to navigate school

- Work in short intervals
- Negotiate a reduced workload and time restrictions
- Manage visual challenges such as copies of notes instead of the projected information
- Have early release from classes to avoid congested hallways
- Consider a 504 plan if prolonged symptoms occur

How to reduce symptoms at home

- Limit visual activities
- Use a line guide for reading
- Limit time at the computer
- Limit time with hand held devices (cell phones)
- Limit social activities

References:

1. Shim, J, Smith DH, Van Lunen B. On-field signs and symptoms associated with recovery duration after concussion in High School and College Athletes: A critically Appraised Topic. *Journal of Sport Rehabilitation*. 2015; 24, 72-76.
2. www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP
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4. American Physical Therapy Association – Neurology Section Sponsored Course