

What is a Concussion?

Answers for Parents

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A concussion is a mild injury to the brain that disrupts how the brain normally works. Concussions are caused by a hit or jolt to the head. Sometimes concussions are casually called "dings" or "getting your bell rung." No matter what you call it, it is important to get your child examined by a physician!

What are signs and symptoms of a concussion?

Visit the doctor or go to the Emergency Room IMMEDIATELY if you are experiencing:

- Increasing confusion
- Severe, worsening or persistent headache
- Multiple vomiting episodes
- Difficulty waking up
- Trouble walking
- Seizure
- Strange behavior
- Weakness
- Loss of or sudden change in vision
- One pupil is larger than the other
- Losing consciousness

Visit the doctor within a few days if you are experiencing:

- Feeling dazed, dizzy or confused
- Forgetting what happened around the time of the injury
- Headache
- Nausea
- Sensitivity to light/noise
- Trouble concentrating, difficulty remembering, slowed thinking
- Emotional changes: Irritability, sadness, anxiety, etc.

What happens if your child goes back to sports too soon after a concussion?

While most young people recover from a single concussion, everyone's recovery is unique. If an athlete returns to activity before the symptoms have gone away, concussions can result in prolonged headaches, poor school performance and many other post-concussive syndrome symptoms. Also, another blow to the head while the initial concussion is still healing can occasionally result in fatal brain swelling—a condition known as second impact syndrome.



What can you do to help your child get better?

1) Take it easy!

- Rest from all exercise and athletic activities.
- Rest from texting, email, computer time, phone calls, loud music/TV/movies and video games.
- Rest from intense studying and reading, as directed by your doctor.
- Needing more rest than usual after a concussion is normal. So whenever your child feels tired, take a break or a short nap.

2) Be safe and smart!

Until your child is feeling better he or she should not do anything that may cause them to fall or injure their brain again. Initially that means no activities like riding a bike, skateboarding, sports or other activities that might lead them to fall or hit their head.

3) Break things down into easy steps.

After a concussion, it may be harder to concentrate or pay attention. So, rather than studying for an hour straight, have your child study for 30 minutes (or less) at a time, take a break and then study for another 30 minutes.

4) See a doctor experienced in treating concussions.

When can your child go back to sports safely?

Once all of the symptoms are gone, a doctor will evaluate your child and determine readiness to return to sports. Your child will be evaluated with tests of memory, concentration, balance and more.

Why should you choose the Children's Hospital Los Angeles comprehensive Sports Concussion Program for your follow-up?

- Same-day or next-day medical appointments to evaluate your child soon after a concussion.
- Consultation to determine appropriate, safe and timely return to sports.
- Multidisciplinary team of Board-Certified experts in sports medicine, neuropsychology, rehabilitation and more.
- Coordination of care with primary care providers, school personnel, coaches, athletic trainers and other relevant personnel.



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To schedule an appointment at
the Children's Hospital Los Angeles
Sports Concussion Clinic, please call 323-361-2142.