

CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT

A concussion is a brain injury and all brain injuries are serious. They are caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or by a blow to another part of the body with the force transmitted to the head. They can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works. Even though most concussions are mild, all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications including prolonged brain damage and death if not recognized and managed properly. You can't see a concussion and most sports concussions occur without loss of consciousness. Signs and symptoms of concussion may show up right after the injury or can take hours or days to fully appear. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms or signs of concussion yourself, seek medical attention right away.

Symptoms may include one or more of the following:

- Headaches or "Pressure in head"
- Drowsiness
- Nervousness or anxiety
- Nausea or vomiting
- Amnesia
- Irritability
- Neck pain
- "Don't feel right"
- More emotional
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Fatigue or low energy
- Confusion
- Blurred, double, or fuzzy vision
- Sadness
- Change in sleep patterns
- Feeling sluggish or slowed down
- Repeating question or comment
- Feeling foggy or groggy
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Concentration or memory problems (forgetting game plays)

Signs observed by teammates/parents/coaches include the following:

- Appears dazed
- Can't recall events prior to hit
- Answers questions slowly
- Confused about assignment
- Any change in typical behavior or personality
- Slurred speech
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Seizures or convulsions
- Moves clumsily, displays incoordination
- Vacant facial expression
- Can't recall events after hit
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Forgets plays
- Loses consciousness

What can happen if my child keeps on playing with a concussion or returns to soon? Athletes with the signs and symptoms of concussion should be removed from play immediately. Continuing to play with the signs and symptoms of a concussion leaves the young athlete especially vulnerable to greater injury. There is an increased risk of significant damage from a concussion for a period of time after that concussion occurs, particularly if the athlete suffers another concussion before completely recovering from the first one. This can lead to prolonged recovery, or even to severe brain swelling (second impact syndrome) with devastating and even fatal consequences. It is well known that adolescent or teenage athletes will often under report symptoms of injuries, and concussions are no different. As a result, education of administrators, coaches, parents and students is the key for student-athlete's safety.

If you think your child has suffered a concussion inform your child's coach. Any athlete even suspected of suffering a concussion should be removed from the game or practice immediately. No athlete may return to activity after an apparent head injury or concussion, regardless of how mild it seems or how quickly symptoms clear, without medical clearance. Close observation of the athlete should continue for several hours. The "Zackery Lystedt Law" in Washington requires the following: "a youth athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury in a practice or game shall be removed from competition at that time" and "...may not return to play until the athlete is evaluated by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussion and received written clearance to return to play from that health care provider".

More information: <http://www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports/>