

WHEN IN DOUBT Take Them Out!

Fact Sheet for Parents and Caregivers

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI) caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that can change the way the brain normally works. Concussions can occur from a fall, blow to the body, or collision that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. Even a "ding" or "getting your bell rung" can result in a concussion and should be evaluated by a physician.

Concussions can happen in any sport, but most often occur in contact sports, such as football, rugby, or ice hockey. Every year, about 4,000 New York children age 19 and younger are treated at hospitals for sports-related TBIs. Concussions are often treated elsewhere, such as by a school nurse or primary care physician.

You can't see a concussion and some athletes may not experience and/or report symptoms until hours or days after the injury. If you think your child has a concussion, seek medical attention right away.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?

If your child has experienced a bump or blow to the head during a game or practice, look for any of the following signs and symptoms of a concussion:

SIGNS EXHIBITED BY ATHLETE AND OBSERVED BY COACH

- Dazed or stunned
- Confusion about game assignment, position, score, and/or opponent
- Forgets sports plays
- Clumsy movement
- Delayed response to questions
- Loss of consciousness (even briefly)
- Behavior or personality changes
- Inability to recall events before or after a hit or fall

SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness or balance problems
- Double or blurred vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory loss
- Confusion
- Doesn't "feel right"

HOW CAN I HELP PREVENT CONCUSSIONS?

Remember, every sport is different, but here are some general steps you can take to prevent concussions:

- Make sure your child wears the right protective equipment for their sport (like helmets, padding, shin guards, and eye and mouth guards). Protective equipment must fit properly, be in good condition, and be worn consistently and correctly.
- Know the signs and symptoms of a concussion.
- Ensure your child follows their coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Encourage your child to practice good sportsmanship.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK MY CHILD HAS A CONCUSSION?

- 1. Seek medical attention right away.** A health care professional will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child to return to play.
- 2. Keep your child out of play until he or she has been symptom-free for at least 24 hours and evaluated and cleared by a licensed physician.*** Concussions are serious and can take time to heal. Children who return to play too quickly – while the brain is still healing – risk a greater chance of having a second concussion. Second or later concussions can be very serious and potentially cause permanent brain damage.
- 3. Tell your child's coach about a recent concussion in any sport.** Coaches should know if your child had a recent concussion in *any* sport. If your child received a concussion in another sport or activity, his or her coach may not know about it unless you tell them.

**This is a specific guideline stated in the Concussion Management and Awareness Act. Your local school district may have additional guidelines.*

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