



An Athlete's Guide to Concussions

Nationwide Children's Hospital Sports Medicine wants you to be aware of concussions and the potential dangers to athletes in any sport. Safety begins by educating yourself!

What is a concussion and how do I get one?

A concussion is an invisible injury that temporarily changes how the brain works. A concussion may be caused by a blow, bump or jolt to the head or by any fall or hit that jars the brain. While a blow to the head may not seem like a big deal, concussion symptoms can develop upon impact or up to two days after the incident.

If I don't get "knocked out," I don't have a concussion, right?

WRONG! Ninety percent of concussions do NOT involve being "knocked out." Every concussion is serious because every concussion is a **brain injury**.

How do I know if I have a concussion?

If you've suffered a blow to the head or a hard, jarring impact to your body, ask yourself these questions:

- Do I have a headache?
- Am I dizzy or having trouble maintaining my balance?
- Do I feel sick to my stomach or have I thrown up?
- Do I feel drowsy and tired?
- Do lights or noise bother me?
- Am I having trouble remembering things?
- Am I having trouble concentrating?
- Does it feel like everything is slowed down?
- Do I feel like I can't think clearly?

If you can answer YES to any of these questions – even one – then you need to protect yourself by taking the steps on the reverse side of this sheet.



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What do I do if I think I have a concussion?

Stop! Whether it's a game, practice or just playing with friends, stop participating immediately! You could be putting yourself at risk of death if you play through it.

Tell someone! Tell your coach, athletic trainer or your parent(s). Be honest about how you feel.

Don't return to play! Do not return to any physical activity until you have permission to do so by a medical professional, such as a doctor or athletic trainer.

Is it dangerous if I keep playing when I have a concussion?

YES! If you play through a concussion, you are putting yourself at risk for **Second Impact Syndrome**. If you get hit in the head again before your first concussion heals, you could collapse and end up with brain damage, in a wheelchair or dead. No game or practice is worth the chance of dying.

After a concussion, when do I get to go back to sports?

You have to wait until your symptoms go away completely, you can complete your schoolwork, AND a healthcare professional (like a doctor or an athletic trainer) says it is okay for you to start participating in physical activity.

You will need to complete the gradual Return-to-Play Progression. This progression is important and should not be skipped. If your symptoms come back during the progression, then you are not ready to return without putting yourself in danger.

We know waiting to get better is boring. Many athletes feel pressured to say they do not have symptoms when they still do. This is very dangerous and could result in serious consequences. *Be honest and protect yourself and your brain.*



What can I do to make myself better faster?

The best treatment for a concussion is **REST**.

- Avoid any physical activity like push-ups, running, sport-specific activities, etc.
- Avoid computer use, excessive television, video games, texting and loud music.
- Avoid dances, pep rallies and assemblies.
- Get extra sleep and eat a healthy diet.
- Follow your doctor or athletic trainer's recommendations.

If I get a concussion, how will it affect school?

If you are able to attend school, some concussion symptoms may affect your ability to do well in class. Therefore, you should tell your teachers about your concussion right away.

How can I keep myself from getting a concussion?

- Wear equipment that fits properly and is checked and maintained regularly (if applicable).
- Follow the rules of your sport and practice good sportsmanship.
- Listen to your coaches and practice good technique.

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