

INJURY MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

OVERVIEW OF CONCUSSION PROTOCOL

What Is a Concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury—or TBI—caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or by a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. This sudden movement can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, stretching and damaging the brain cells and creating chemical changes in the brain.

Concussions Are Serious

Medical providers may describe a concussion as a “mild” brain injury because concussions are usually not life-threatening. Even so, the effects of a concussion can be serious.

Concussion Signs and Symptoms

Children and teens who show or report one or more of the signs and symptoms listed below, or simply say they just “don't feel right” after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, may have a concussion or more serious brain injury.

- Can't recall events *prior to* or *after* a hit or fall.
- Appears dazed or stunned.
- Forgets an instruction, is confused about an assignment or position, or is unsure of the game, score, or opponent.
- Moves clumsily.
- Answers questions slowly.
- Loses consciousness (*even briefly*).
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes. **Reported**
- Headache or “pressure” in head.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Balance problems or dizziness, or double or blurry vision.
- Bothered by light or noise.
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy.
- Confusion, or concentration or memory problems.
- Just not “feeling right,” or “feeling down”.

Signs and symptoms generally show up soon after the injury. However, you may not know how serious the injury is at first and some symptoms may not show up for hours or days. For example, in the first few minutes your child or teen might be a little confused or a bit dazed, but an hour later your child might not be able to remember how he or she got hurt.

You should continue to check for signs of concussion right after the injury and a few days after the injury. If your child or teen's concussion signs or symptoms get worse, you should take him or her to the emergency department right away.

If you think an athlete has a concussion, implement the HEADS UP Action Plan:

Remove the young athlete from play. When in doubt, sit them out!

Seek Medical Attention

Keep a young athlete with a possible concussion out of play the same day of the injury and until cleared by a health care provider. Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Only a health care provider should assess a young athlete for a possible concussion. After you remove a young athlete with a possible concussion from practice or play, the decision about return to practice or play is a medical decision that should be made by a health care provider. As a coach, recording the following information can help a health care provider in assessing the young athlete after the injury:

- Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head or body
- Any loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) and if so, for how long
- Any memory loss right after the injury
- Any seizures right after the injury
- Number of previous concussions (if any)

Children and teens who continue to play while having concussion symptoms or who return to play too soon—while the brain is still healing— have a greater chance of getting another concussion. A repeat concussion that occurs while the brain is still healing from the first injury can be very serious and can affect a child or teen for a lifetime. It can even be fatal.

Inform and Educate Parents

Inform the young athlete's parent(s) about the possible concussion, and give them the HEADS UP fact sheet for parents. This fact sheet can help parents watch the young athlete for

concussion signs or symptoms that may show up or get worse once the young athlete is at home or returns to school.

Get Written Concussion Care Instructions

Ask for written instructions from the young athlete's health care provider on return to play. These instructions should include information about when they can return to play and what steps you should take to help them safely return to play. Before returning to play an athlete should:

- Be back to doing their regular school activities.
- Not have any symptoms from the injury when doing normal activities.
- Have the green-light from their health care provider to begin the return to play process.