

# HEADS UP – SPORTS CONCUSSION: Parent/Athlete Concussion Information Sheet

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that changes the way the brain normally works. A concussion is caused by bump, blow or jolt to the head or body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CONCUSSION?

Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until hours or days after the injury.

If an athlete reports **one or more** symptoms of concussion after a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body, he or she should be kept out of play the day of the injury and until a physician, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says he or she is symptom-free and it’s OK to return to play.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness.
- Athletes who have at any point in their lives had a concussion have an increased risk for another concussion.
- Young children and teens are more likely to get a concussion and take longer to recover than adults.

## CONCUSSION DANGER SIGNS

In rare cases, a dangerous blood clot may form on the brain in a person with a concussion and crowd the brain against the skull. An athlete should receive immediate medical attention if after a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body he or she exhibits any of the following danger signs:

- One pupil is larger than the other (if not a normal state for the athlete)
- Is drowsy or cannot be awakened
- A headache that gets worse
- Weakness, numbness or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Cannot recognize people or places
- Becomes increasingly confused, restless or agitated
- Has unusual behavior
- Loses consciousness (even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously)

Symptoms Observed by Coaching Staff	Symptoms Reported by Athletes
Appears dazed or stunned	Headache or “pressure” in head
Is confused about assignment or position	Nausea or vomiting
Forgets an instruction	Balance problems or dizziness
Is unsure of game, score or opponent	Double or blurry vision
Moves clumsily	Sensitivity to light
Answers questions slowly	Sensitivity to noise
Loses consciousness, even briefly	Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
Shows mood, behavior or personality changes	Concentration or memory problems
Can’t recall events <i>prior</i> to hit or fall	Confusion
Can’t recall events <i>after</i> hit or fall	Just not “feeling right” or “feeling down”

This information is provided by Providence Health & Services and our sports concussion specialists.

## WHY SHOULD AN ATHLETE REPORT THEIR SYMPTOMS?

If an athlete has a concussion, his or her brain needs time to heal. While an athlete's brain is still healing, he or she is much more likely to have another concussion. Repeat concussions can increase the time it takes to recover. In rare cases, repeat concussions in young athletes can result in brain swelling or permanent damage to their brain. They can even be fatal.

**Remember:** Concussions affect people differently. While most athletes with a concussion recover quickly and fully, some will have symptoms that last for days or even weeks. A more serious concussion can last for months or longer.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOUR ATHLETE HAS A CONCUSSION?

If you suspect that an athlete has a concussion, remove the athlete from play and seek medical attention. Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD MAY HAVE A CONCUSSION

- 1. Seek medical attention right away.** A physician can determine if a concussion occurred, how serious it is and when it's safe for your child to return to sports.
- 2. Keep your child out of play.** Concussions take time to heal. Don't let your child return to play until a physician says it's OK, even if your child insists otherwise. Children who return to play too soon – while the brain is still healing – risk a greater chance of having a second concussion. Second or later concussions can be extremely serious. They can cause permanent brain damage, affecting your child for a lifetime.
- 3. Tell your child's coach about any recent concussion.** Coaches should know if your child had a recent concussion. The coach may not know about a previous concussion and there could be serious health risks for your child.

This information is adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Heads Up concussion program. For detailed information on concussion and traumatic brain injury, visit [cdc.gov/headsup/providers](http://cdc.gov/headsup/providers).

**PROVIDENCE IS COMMITTED TO HELPING YOUNG ATHLETES, THEIR FAMILIES  
AND THEIR COACHES PREVENT, RECOGNIZE AND TREAT CONCUSSIONS.**

**[Providence.org/concussion](http://Providence.org/concussion)**

