

CONCUSSION IN YOUTH SPORTS:

USE YOUR HEAD AND SAVE YOUR BRAIN!

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FACTS:

- A concussion is a **brain injury**.
- Bell-ringers and dings are **concussions**.
- All concussions are **serious**.
- Concussions can occur without **loss of consciousness**.
- Concussions can occur without **memory loss**.
- Recognition and proper management of concussions when they **first occur** can prevent **further injury** or even **death**.
- Most athletes can **safely return to play** after recovery.
- Everyone recovers at their **own rate**.
- Youth athletes should **not return to play the same day** if they experience symptoms of a concussion.
- In general, the **younger** the athlete, the **longer** the recovery.
- Both **cognitive** and **physical** rest are the key to recovery.
- U.S. annual rate of sports/rec related concussions: **3.8 million**.

A **CONCUSSION** is caused by a bump or blow (usually to the head) that is hard enough to disrupt the metabolic functioning of the brain. A fall or collision with another player can cause a concussion.

You cannot see a concussion. You may not notice symptoms right after the injury occurs, and some symptoms may first appear days later, or when you next return to sports or school.

A concussion is NOT an injury you should ignore, or continue to play with.

An undiagnosed concussion can affect your abilities at school and in everyday activities. Continuing to play sports with a concussion can lead to permanent, serious brain injuries, and even death.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CONCUSSIONS

COGNITIVE

- Trouble concentrating
- Trouble remembering
- Feeling “foggy”
- Confusion

PHYSICAL

- Nausea (feeling a little like you might throw up)
- Dizziness or balance problems
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Headache
- Feeling tired or like you’re moving too slowly
- Sleepiness, or sleeping too much or too little

EMOTIONAL

- Feeling more grouchy than usual
- Feeling sad
- Feeling nervous
- More emotional than usual

...OR YOU JUST DON'T FEEL RIGHT

IF YOU THINK YOU'VE HAD A CONCUSSION

- Never ignore a bump to the head
 - Pay attention to how you feel
 - Pay attention to thinking problems
- Be **HONEST** with your coach when he or she asks you how you feel
- Tell your coach or teammates
- Ask to be taken out of the game
- Tell your parents about any symptoms or problems you are having after a bump on the head
- You need to get plenty of **REST** in order to recover – you do not help yourself or your team if you keep playing
- Do not return to practice and games if you are still having any symptoms – it's not worth it
- Return to practice and play **ONLY** after your brain is 100% healed and your doctor says it's ok

WILL I GET BETTER? HOW DO I GET BETTER?

Most athletes who have a concussion DO get better, and DO get to return to sports and all the other things they love to do.

BUT: everyone recovers at their own rate, and you need to be patient and let it happen.

The most important thing you can do to get better is to let your brain REST.

That is, stay out of sports (including recess and PE) and any other activity that could lead to another bump on the head, or that gets your heart really pumping.

You also need to avoid – or minimize – how hard your brain has to work in other ways, too... activities that make the brain work hard to focus and pay attention will also be difficult after a concussion, and will also slow down the healing process. This includes a lot of things that student athletes do every day, like paying attention in class, reading, taking tests, and completing homework, as well as playing video games, playing musical instruments, and sending emails and text messages.

Your health care professional should talk to you about how to manage schoolwork and other responsibilities while recovering from a concussion. They can also talk to your teachers to drop, change, or reschedule tests and other assignments to allow your brain to rest and recover. Your grades and GPA do not have to suffer. You can even reschedule big tests like the SAT if you need to.

IS THIS REALLY THAT BIG A DEAL?

ABSOLUTELY!!!

If you do not give your brain the rest that it needs to heal properly, your symptoms may never go away completely.

If you get hit on the head again before you have totally recovered, it may not take a very hard hit to make your symptoms much worse, or to cause a fatal brain injury.

Experiencing another concussion before you have recovered from the first can also lead to permanent brain injury, or even death.

HOW DO I KNOW WHEN I'M BETTER AND CAN RETURN TO SPORTS?

When you are 100% symptom-free at rest and with a full cognitive (academic) load, you can begin a GRADUAL return to sports, under your doctor's care. Your doctor will have you gradually increase your level of physical activity, over 5-7 days, to be sure that you remain free of any symptoms as you become more and more active.

**For more information, see (CI website)
and www.cdc.gov/injury.**

Dr. Shapiro is a licensed psychologist, Credentialed ImPACT Consultant, founding member of the Sports Neuropsychology Society and an RRCA certified running coach. She works with an athlete's primary care physician, allied health care professionals, school, and coaches as needed in order to evaluate the effects of a concussion, develop a comprehensive concussion management plan, and determine when it is safe for the athlete to return to sports. Dr. Shapiro is available to work with schools, teams and leagues to provide concussion education to coaches, parents and athletes, and to implement baseline testing programs. Contact Dr. Shapiro at (404) 937-3107 or mshapiro@ganeuropsych.com.

*Information in this handout was adapted from **Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports**, published by the CDC, and **A Concussion is a Brain Injury**, published by the Brain Injury Association of America.*