



Marshfield Clinic®

Sports Medicine

Concussion information for athletes, parents and coaches

What you need to know about concussion:

- A concussion is an injury to the brain that disturbs its normal functioning.
- Concussion can be caused by a bump to the head or a blow to the body.
- Concussion may occur during practices or games in any sport.
- Concussion does not always result in, or from, a loss of consciousness.

All concussions are serious.

- Recognition and proper management of concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.
- Signs and symptoms of a concussion may be apparent right after the injury, but in some instances, the symptoms may not present for hours or days following the initial injury.

Symptoms observed by parents, guardians and coaches:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets instructions
- Is unsure of game, score or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Cannot recall events prior to or after hit or fall
- Has unequal pupil dilation

Symptoms reported by the athlete:

- Headache
- Feeling “in a fog”
- Loss of appetite
- Low energy or feels run down
- Feeling “pressure” in the head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light and/or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not “feel right”

Immediate action to take:

Athletes who report or exhibit any of these signs or symptoms must be immediately removed from play until given written permission to return by a health care professional with experience in evaluating and managing pediatric concussions and head injuries. An athletic coach or official involved in a youth athletic activity shall remove an athlete if it is determined that the athlete exhibits signs, symptoms or behavior consistent with a concussion or head injury, or suspects the person has sustained a concussion or head injury per *Wisconsin Act 172 – Concussions in Youth Athletic Activities*.

To reduce concussion risk:

- Ensure all athletes follow the safety rules and rules of the sport
- Practice good sportsmanship at all times
- Make sure the proper protective equipment is worn and fitted correctly, and maintained properly
- Review the signs and symptoms of a concussion before every sports season

If a concussion is suspected:

- Do not ignore the symptoms of a head injury.
- Seek medical attention right away.
- Stay out of play to allow the brain to heal and to help avoid permanent brain damage.
- Make sure coaches and parents are aware of any concussion injury.
- Allow time for rest to help the brain heal. (Sleeping is permitted ensuring the athlete can be awakened.)
- Avoid taking pain medications soon after a concussion to keep from covering up symptoms.
- Modifications also may need to be made at school and can be directed by your healthcare provider

Prevent long-term problems:

- Do not play with a concussion. Discourage athletes from pressuring injured athletes to play and persuade athletes to admit if they are not “just fine.”
- Avoid repeat concussion. Concussions that occur before the brain recovers from a first concussion can result in long term conditions:

Second-impact syndrome – a second blow to the head while recovering from an initial concussion can result in catastrophic consequences

Post-concussion syndrome – chronic cognitive and neurobehavioral difficulties because of an initial injury or recurrent injury

Return to play recommendations:

A sample five-day return to play routine is as follows. Each of these phases generally takes one day. If any symptoms are experienced up to 24 hours following, the activity must be stopped immediately and a health care provider should be contacted.

Day 1 No activity. Rest until no symptoms.

Day 2 Light aerobic exercise.

Day 3 Sport-specific training

Day 4 Non-contact drills

Day 5 Full-contact drills

Day 6 Game play

(Continued)

What generally should be expected for recovery?

Most young people will recover completely within two weeks from a single concussion. Some people can take longer to recover than others.

Proper recognition and management of a sports concussion can allow athletes to safely participate in sports they enjoy. Remember – “If in doubt, sit out!”

Sources:

2011 Wisconsin Act 172: Concussions in Youth Athletic Activities;

<http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2011/related/acts/172>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Heads Up – Concussion in Youth Sports;

www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/youth.html

Marshfield Clinic Sports Medicine: Concussion - General guidelines and instructions for the care of a sports-related concussion; 098-018(10/09)