



## A Fact Sheet for COACHES

To download the coaches fact sheet in Spanish, please visit  
[www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports](http://www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports) Para descargar la hoja informativa para los entrenadores  
en español, por favor visite: [www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports](http://www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports)

### THE FACTS

- A concussion is a **brain injury**.
- All concussions are **serious**.
- **Most** concussions occur **without** loss of consciousness.
- Concussions can occur **in any sport**.
- Recognition and proper management of concussions when they **first occur** can help prevent further injury or even death.

### WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is an injury that changes how the cells in the brain normally work. A concussion is caused by a blow to the head or body that caused the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. Concussions can also result from a fall or from players colliding with each other or stationary objects.

The potential for concussion is greatest in athletic environments where collisions are common. However, concussions may occur in any sport or recreational activity. As many as 3.8 million sports- and recreation-related concussions occur in the United States each year.

### RECOGNIZING A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION

“When in doubt, hold them out”.

To help recognize a concussion, you should watch for the following two things among you athletes:

1. A forceful blow to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head.  
- and -
2. Any change in the athlete’s behavior, judgment, or physical functioning. (See the signs and symptoms of concussion listed on the next page.)

It’s better to miss one game than the whole season!

## **SIGNS OBSERVED BY COACHING STAFF**

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets sports plays
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality
- Can't recall events prior to hit or fall
- Can't recall events after hit or fall

## **SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE**

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not feel "right"

As an athletic coach, it is your responsibility to remove an athlete from the youth athletic activity if you determine the athlete exhibits signs, symptoms, or behavior consistent with a concussion or if you suspect the athlete has sustained a concussion. The athlete then needs to be evaluated by a health care provider to determine if he/she sustained a concussion. An athlete who has been removed because of a suspected concussion may not participate again until he/she is evaluated by a health care provider, is symptom free and has been provided written clearance to participate from a qualified health care provider.

Wisconsin Act 172 defines a "health care provider" as a person whom all of the following apply:

1. He or she holds a credential that authorizes the person to provide health care.
2. He or she is trained and has experience in evaluating and managing pediatric concussions and head injuries.
3. He or she is practicing within the scope of his or her credential.

Wisconsin Act 172 defines "credential" to mean a license or certificate of certification issued by the state.

It is recommended that persons operating a youth athletic activity provide recommendations to athletes and parents about potential health care providers.

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

## Prevention and Preparation

As a coach, you can play a key role in preventing concussions and responding to them properly when they occur. Here are some steps you can take to ensure the best outcome for your athletes and the team:

- **Educate athletes and parents about concussion.** At the beginning of each sports season for a youth athletic activity, each person who wishes to participate should receive concussion and head injury information (such as) 1) 'Know Your Concussion ABCs: A Fact Sheet for Parents' and 2) 'Know Your Concussion ABCs: A Fact Sheet for Athletes'. No person may participate in a youth athletic activity (practice or play) unless the person returns the 'Parent/Athlete Agreement' signed by the athlete and, if he or she is under the age of 19, by his or her parent or guardian.

Talk with athletes and their parents about the dangers and potential long-term consequences of concussion. Explain your concerns about concussion and your expectations of safe play to athletes, parents, and assistant coaches.

- **Insist that safety comes first.**
  - Teach athletes safe playing techniques and encourage them to follow the rules of play.
  - Encourage athletes to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
  - Make sure athletes wear the right protective equipment for their activity (such as helmets, padding, shin guards, and eye and mouth guards). Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.

- **Check with your youth athletic activity organizer about concussion guidelines and policies.** Concussion policy and/or management plans can be developed to include commitment to safety, emergency procedures, and a 'Return to Play' procedures.
- **Teach athletes and parents that it's not smart to play with a concussion.** Sometimes players and parents wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. Discourage others from pressuring injured athletes to play. Know if players have ever had previous concussions. Never allow an athlete that has a confirmed or suspected concussion to return to activity until symptom free and provided with written clearance from a health care provider. Don't let athletes persuade you that they are fine.
- **Prevent long-term problems.** A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in *Second Impact Syndrome*, which causes brain swelling, permanent brain damage, and even death. This more serious condition is called *second impact syndrome*. Keep athletes with known or suspected concussion from play until they have been evaluated by a health care provider with experience in evaluating for concussion. Remind your athletes: "It's better to miss one game than the whole season."

## ACTION PLAN

### WHAT SHOULD A COACH DO WHEN A CONCUSSION IS SUSPECTED?

1. **Remove the athlete from play.** Look for the signs, symptoms, and behaviors of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head.
2. **Ensure that the athlete is evaluated by a trained health care provider.** Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care providers have a number of methods that they can use to assess if the athlete has sustained a concussion. As a coach, recording the following information can help health care providers in assessing the athlete after the injury:
  - Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head
  - Any loss of consciousness (passed out/ knocked out) and if so, for how long
  - Any memory loss surrounding the injury
  - What other symptoms the athlete experienced after the injury
  - Number of previous concussions (if any)
3. **Inform the athlete's parents or guardians about the possible concussion.** Make sure the injured athlete's parent or guardian knows that the athlete is required be seen by a health care provider with experience in pediatric concussion management. Provide recommendations of potential health care providers in the area to the athlete, parents or guardian. Do not allow the athlete to be unsupervised at any time (return to the locker room or bus) if you suspect a concussion. Do not allow the athlete to drive home if you suspect a concussion.
4. An athlete who has been removed from any youth athletic activity because of a determined or suspected concussion **may not participate again until he/she is evaluated by a health care provider, is symptom free and provides written clearance from a health care provider to return to activity.**

*It is recommended that coaches participate in additional Concussion/Head Injury Training such as:*

**Free Concussion in Sports Course offered by NFHS:**

Register at: <http://www.nfhslearn.com/electiveDetail.aspx?courseID=15000>

Course Objectives:

- Educate coaches, parents, officials, and students about concussions
- Identify the signs and symptoms of concussions
- Understand the problems associated with concussions
- Actions to take when a concussion is present
- Identify responsibilities of coaches, parents, officials, and students

The WIAA strongly encourages coaches at all levels to take this free course along with officials, parents and athletes so they have a better understanding of concussions and their effects on young, adolescent brain function.

# KNOW YOUR CONCUSSION ABCs

Assess  
the  
situation

Be alert for  
signs and  
symptoms

Contact a  
health care  
professional

## What is a concussion?

A concussion is a type of brain injury that changes the way the brain normally works. A concussion is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head and can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. Even what seems to be a mild bump to the head can be serious.

Concussions can have a more serious effect on a young, developing brain and need to be addressed correctly.

## What are the signs and symptoms of a concussion?

You can't see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after an injury or may not appear or be noticed until hours or days after the injury. It is important to watch for changes in how your child or teen is acting or feeling, if symptoms are getting worse, or if s/he just "doesn't feel right." Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness.

If your child or teen reports **one or more** of the symptoms of concussion listed below, or if you notice the symptoms yourself, seek medical attention right away. Children and teens are among those at greatest risk for concussion.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION

### SIGNS OBSERVED BY PARENTS OR GUARDIANS

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about events
- Answers questions slowly
- Repeats questions
- Can't recall events prior to the hit, bump, or fall
- Can't recall events after the hit, bump, or fall
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Forgets class schedule or assignments

#### Thinking/Remembering:

- Difficulty thinking clearly
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Feeling more slowed down
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy

#### Physical:

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Fatigue or feeling tired
- Blurry or double vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Numbness or tingling
- Does not "feel right"

#### Emotional:

- Irritable
- Sad
- More emotional than usual
- Nervous

#### Sleep\*:

- Drowsy
- Sleeps less than usual
- Sleeps more than usual
- Has trouble falling asleep

\*Only ask about sleep symptoms if the injury occurred on a prior day.





# DANGER SIGNS

Be alert for symptoms that worsen over time. Your child or teen should be seen in an emergency department right away if s/he has:

- One pupil (the black part in the middle of the eye) larger than the other
- Difficult to arouse
- Severe headache or worsening headache
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Difficulty recognizing people or places
- Increasing confusion, restlessness, or agitation
- Unusual behavior
- Loss of consciousness (even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously)

Children and teens with a concussion should NEVER return to sports or recreation activities on the same day the injury occurred. They should delay returning to their activities until a health care provider experienced in evaluating for concussion says they are symptom-free and provide written clearance to return to activity. This means, until permitted, not returning to:

- Physical Education (PE) class,
- Sports practices or games, or
- Physical activity at recess.

## What should I do if my child or teen has a concussion?

1. Seek medical attention. A health care provider experienced in evaluating for concussions can direct concussion management and review when it is safe for your child to return to normal activities, including school (concentration and learning activities) and physical activity. If your child or teen has been removed from a youth athletic activity because of a suspected concussion or head injury, they may not participate again until he/she is evaluated by a health care provider and receives written clearance to participate in the activity from the health care provider.
2. Help them take time to get better. If your child or teen has a concussion, her or his brain needs time to heal. Your child or teen should limit activities while **he/she** is recovering from a concussion. Exercising or doing activities that involve a lot of concentration, such as studying, using a computer, texting, or playing video games may worsen or prolong concussion symptoms (such as headache or tiredness). Rest will help your child recover more quickly. Your child may become upset that he/she cannot participate in activities.

3. Together with your child or teen, learn more about concussions. Talk about the potential long-term effects of concussion and the problems caused by returning to daily activities too quickly (especially physical activity and learning/concentration).

## How can I help my child return to school safely after a concussion?

Help your child or teen get needed support when returning to school after a concussion. Talk with your child's school administrators, teachers, school nurse, coach, and counselor about your child's concussion and symptoms. Your child may feel frustrated, sad, and even angry because s/he cannot keep up with school work and learn as well after a concussion. Your child may also feel isolated from peers and social networks. Talk often with your child about these issues and offer your support and encouragement. As your child's symptoms decrease, the extra help or support can be removed gradually. Children and teens who return to school after a concussion may need to:

- Take rest breaks as needed,
- Spend fewer hours at school,
- Be given more time to take tests or complete assignments,
- Receive help with schoolwork, and/or
- Reduce time spent reading, writing, or on the computer.

To learn more about concussion go to :[www.cdc.gov/Concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion) or call 1.800.CDC.INFO