



HEADS UP SCHOOLS

A Fact Sheet for Parents

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. Concussions 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

SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY YOUR CHILD OR TEEN

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.*

To download this fact sheet in Spanish, please visit: www.cdc.gov/Concussion. Para obtener una copia electrónica de esta hoja de información en español, por favor visite: www.cdc.gov/Concussion.

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
- Drowsiness or cannot be awakened
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away
- 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 professional experienced in evaluating for concussion says they are symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. 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 right away.** A health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion can determine how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child or teen to return to normal activities, including physical activity and school (concentration and learning activities).
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 may need to limit activities while s/he is recovering from a concussion. Exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration, such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games may cause concussion symptoms (such as headache or tiredness) to reappear or get worse. After a concussion, physical and cognitive activities—such as concentration and learning—should be carefully managed and monitored by a health care professional.
3. **Together with your child or teen, learn more about concussions.** Talk about the potential long-term effects of concussion and the dangers of returning too soon to normal activities (especially physical activity and learning/concentration). For more information about concussion and free resources, visit: www.cdc.gov/Concussion.

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 teachers, school nurse, coach, speech-language pathologist, or counselor about your child's concussion and symptoms. Your child may feel frustrated, sad, and even angry because s/he cannot return to recreation and sports right away, or cannot keep up with schoolwork. 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 and to order materials **FREE-OF-CHARGE**, go to: www.cdc.gov/Concussion or call 1.800.CDC.INFO.



Concussion

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

A concussion is injury to the tissue or blood vessels of the brain. It is also called a closed head injury or mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI). A concussion is usually caused by a bump or blow to the head from a fall, a motor vehicle crash, or a sports injury. Sometimes being forcefully shaken may cause a concussion. A concussion changes how the brain works and should be taken seriously.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Medicines:

- **Ibuprofen or acetaminophen:** These medicines decrease pain. They are available without a doctor's order. Ask your primary healthcare provider which medicine is right for you. Ask how much to take and how often to take it. Follow your primary healthcare provider's directions. These medicines can cause stomach bleeding if not taken correctly. Ibuprofen can cause kidney damage. Do not take ibuprofen if you have kidney disease, an ulcer, or allergies to aspirin. Acetaminophen can cause liver damage. Do not drink alcohol if you take acetaminophen.
- **Take your medicine as directed.** Call your healthcare provider if you think your medicine is not helping or if you have side effects. Tell him or her if you are allergic to any medicine. Keep a list of the medicines, vitamins, and herbs you take. Include the amounts, and when and why you take them. Bring the list or the pill bottles to follow-up visits. Carry your medicine list with you in case of an emergency.

Follow up with your healthcare provider as directed: Write down your questions so you remember to ask them during your visits.

Self-care:

- **Have someone wake you regularly during the night:** Ask if someone should wake you at night after your concussion. Ask how often to do so. It is not dangerous to sleep, but you may need to be woken to see if you are thinking clearly. This person should ask you questions such as your name or address.
- **Ice:** Ice helps decrease swelling and pain. Ice may also help prevent tissue damage. Use an ice pack or put crushed ice in a plastic bag. C

the ice pack with a towel and place it on your head for 15 to 20 minutes every hour for up to 2 days after your injury.

- **Rest:** Rest in bed or do quiet activities for 24 hours after your concussion. You may return to normal activities after your symptoms away.
- **Activities:** Ask your primary healthcare provider when you can return to work or sports. You should not return to sports until you no longer have symptoms from your concussion.

Contact your primary healthcare provider if:

- You have nausea or vomiting.
- You feel more sleepy than usual.
- Your symptoms get worse.
- You have arm or leg weakness, numbness, or new problems with coordination.
- You have questions or concerns about your condition or care.

Return to the emergency department if:

- You have a severe headache.
- You vomit multiple times
- Someone tries to wake you and cannot do so.
- You have a seizure, increasing confusion, or a change in personality.
- Your speech becomes slurred, or you have new vision problems.
- You have arm or leg weakness, numbness, or new problems with coordination.
- You have blood or clear fluid coming out of the ears or nose.