

# CONCUSSION INFORMATION SHEET

This sheet has information to help protect your child or teen from concussion or other serious brain injury. Use this information at your child's or teen's games and practices to learn how to spot a concussion and what to do if a concussion occurs.



## WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury – or TBI – caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or by a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to quickly move back and forth. This fast movement can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, creating chemical changes in the brain and sometimes stretching and damaging the brain cells.

## HOW CAN I HELP KEEP MY CHILD OR TEEN SAFE?

Sports are a great way for children and teens to stay healthy and can help them do well in school. To help lower your children's or teen's chances of getting a concussion or other serious brain injury, you should:

### ✓ Help create a culture of safety for the team.

- ▶ Work with their coach to teach ways to lower the chances of getting a concussion.
- ▶ Talk with your child about concussions and ask if they have concerns about reporting a concussion. Emphasize the importance of reporting concussions and taking time to recover from one.
- ▶ Ensure that they follow their coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- ▶ Tell your child or teen that you expect them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.



## PLAN AHEAD

What do you want your child or teen to know about concussions?



### Wear a helmet when appropriate for the sport or activity.

Teach your children or teens that they must wear a helmet to lower the chances of the most serious types of brain or head injury. However, there is no "concussion-proof" helmet. So, even with a helmet, it is important for children and teens to avoid hits to the head.



## TALK WITH YOUR CHILD OR TEEN ABOUT CONCUSSIONS.

Tell them to report concussion symptoms to you and their coach right away. Some think concussions aren't serious or worry that if they report a concussion they will lose their position on the team or look weak. Remind them that it's better to miss one game than the whole season.



## HOW CAN I SPOT A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION?

Children and teens who show or report one or more of the signs and symptoms listed on the reverse side—or simply say they just "don't feel right" after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body—may have a concussion or other serious brain injury.

# Concussions affect each child and teen differently

While most children and teens with a concussion feel better within a couple of weeks, some will have symptoms for months or longer. Talk with your child's or teen's health care provider if their concussion symptoms do not go away or if they get worse after they return to their regular activities.

## SIGNS OBSERVED BY PARENTS OR COACHES

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



## SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY CHILDREN AND TEENS

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Bothered by light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Confusion, concentration or memory problems
- Just not "feeling right," or "feeling down"

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD OR TEEN HAS A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION?

As a parent, if you think your child or teen may have a concussion, you should:

1. Remove your child or teen from play.
2. Keep your child or teen out of play the day of the injury. Your child or teen should be seen by a health care provider and only return to play with permission from a health care provider who is experienced in evaluating for concussion.
3. Ask your child's or teen's health care provider for written instructions on helping your child or teen return to school. You can give the instructions to your child's or teen's school nurse and teacher(s) and return-to-play instructions to the coach and/or athletic trainer.

Children and teens who continue to play while having concussion symptoms or who return to play too soon—while the brain is still healing—have a greater chance of getting another concussion. A repeat concussion that occurs while the brain is still healing from the first injury can be very serious and can affect a child or teen for a lifetime. It can even be fatal.

Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Only a health care provider should assess a child or teen for a possible concussion. Concussion signs and symptoms often show up soon after the injury. But you may not know how serious the concussion is at first, and some symptoms may not show up for hours or days.

The brain needs time to heal after a concussion. A child's or teen's return to school and sports should be a gradual process that is carefully managed and monitored by a health care provider.

## WHAT ARE SOME MORE SERIOUS DANGER SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR?

In rare cases, a dangerous collection of blood (hematoma) may form on the brain after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body and can squeeze the brain against the skull. Call 9-1-1 or take your child or teen to the emergency department right away if, after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, he or she has one or more of these danger signs:

- ▶ One pupil larger than the other
- ▶ Drowsiness or inability to wake up
- ▶ A headache that gets worse and does not go away
- ▶ Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- ▶ Repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions or seizures (shaking or twitching)
- ▶ Unusual behavior, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation
- ▶ Loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) – Even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously

