



## **Your Kids and Concussion - What you NEED to know**

### **What is a Concussion?**

Any brain injury due to impact on the head or the body (a direct blow to head is not necessary, even whiplash type injuries can cause concussion). They can result from one larger impact, or from a series of small impacts. Concussions involve swelling of the brain, and can be thought of as a “brain sprain” - portions of the brain will not work right, and is more susceptible to further injury, until fully healed.

Happens in **10-15% of participants** in contact sports (yes, soccer is a contact sport!).

### **Who Diagnoses/Notifies a Concussion?**

Even with highly trained coaches and athletic trainers, only 1 in 4 concussions suffered in college sports are diagnosed at the time of the event/on the field. This is because symptoms may not appear at all until 24-48 hours later. Thus, *you the parent* may be the first to see these signs,

### **What Signs & Symptoms Should I Look For?**

Athletes with a “hard hit” should be *immediately* assessed for memory loss, confusion, nausea, pupillary changes, or headache, and should NEVER return to play that day if they have any of these symptoms. This is a rule in the NCAA and NFL, with severe enforcement, and is even a felony in some states at this time. *Don't be shy about asking to get your kid checked during play if you suspect an event!*

For those kids who feel fine afterward (remember, 75% of concussions are only diagnosed after the event), you should be on the lookout for a larger number of symptoms over the following days:

Dazed/Stunned/Confused	Sluggish	Light Sensitivity
Headaches	Vision Problems	Sensitivity to loud noises
Nausea/Vomiting	Difficulty Concentrating	Poor Concentration
Clumsy	Sleep – less or more	Irritable/emotional
Moody/Behavior Changes	Forgetful	Even: “Just Not Right”
Memory loss	Dizziness/Poor Balance	

The bottom line is, if you see any of these changes, you need to get your child checked out because if they do have a concussion, they are much more susceptible to further brain injury. It is better to miss a day than to miss a season!

### **What should I do as Parent**

If you suspect that your child may be experiencing symptoms related to a concussion

- Get a physical exam from a physician experienced with concussion care *within 72 hours* of a suspected concussion
- Avoid any sports or physical exertion. This includes Gym Class at school, and afterschool play. It is critical for people with concussions to avoid increased blood flow to the brain, so they need to avoid all physical activities that raise their heart rate.

- “Mental Rest” is just as important as physical rest. Your child should also avoid increased mental effort because of the increases in brain blood flow. Avoid tests, computer use, video gaming, etc. until they have been evaluated, and for any further rest period as recommended.
- You as a parent may need to advocate for your child with their school, as attendance to school and testing may be affected.
- Share the risks of activity with concussion with your kids – they need to know how important the rest periods are for avoiding further brain injury.

Lastly, don't be afraid to ask for help, or for more information!

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