

A Fact Sheet for YOUTH SPORTS COACHES

HEADS UP CONCUSSION

One of the main jobs of a youth sports coach is keeping athletes safe. This sheet has information to help you protect athletes from concussion or other serious brain injury, learn how to spot a concussion, and know 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 move quickly 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 ATHLETES SAFE?

Sports are a great way for children and teens to stay healthy and can help them do well in school. As a youth sports coach, your actions create the culture for safety and can help lower an athlete's chance of getting a concussion or other serious injury. Aggressive and/or unsportsmanlike behavior among athletes can increase their chances of getting a concussion or other serious injury. Here are some ways you can help keep your athletes safe:

Talk with athletes about the importance of reporting a concussion:

- Talk with athletes about any concerns they might have about reporting their concussion symptoms. Make sure to tell them that safety comes first and you expect them to tell you and their parent(s) if they think they have a concussion.

Create a culture of safety at games and practices:

- Teach athletes ways to lower the chances of getting a concussion.
- Enforce the rules of the sport for fair play, safety, and sportsmanship.
- Ensure athletes avoid unsafe actions such as:
 - › Striking another athlete in the head;
 - › Using their head or helmet to contact another athlete;
 - › Making illegal contacts or checking, tackling, or colliding with an unprotected opponent; and/or
 - › Trying to injure or put another athlete at risk for injury.



- Tell athletes that you expect good sportsmanship at all times, both on and off the playing field.

Keep up-to-date on concussion information:

- Review your state, league, and/or organization's concussion guidelines and protocols.
- Take a training course on concussion. CDC offers concussion training at no cost at www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP.
- Download CDC's HEADS UP app or a list of concussion signs and symptoms that you can keep on hand.

Check out the equipment and sports facilities:

- Make sure all athletes wear a helmet that fits well and is in good condition when appropriate for the sport or activity. There is no "concussion-proof" helmet, so it is important to enforce safety rules that protect athletes from hits to the head and when a helmet falls off during a play.
- Work with the game or event administrator to remove tripping hazards and ensure that equipment, such as goalposts, have padding that is in good condition.

Keep emergency contact information handy:

- Make sure all athletes wear a helmet that fits well and is in good condition when appropriate for the sport or activity. There is no "concussion-proof" helmet, so it is important to enforce safety rules that protect athletes from hits to the head and when a helmet falls off during a play.
- Work with the game or event administrator to remove tripping hazards and ensure that equipment, such as goalposts, have padding that is in good condition.