

- SPORT - RELATED -

# CONCUSSION

## A FACT SHEET FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES

### WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A **concussion** is a **brain injury** which results in a temporary disruption of normal brain function and can be caused by any, but not limited to, the following:

- A blow to the head or body from contact with another player, hitting a hard surface such as the ground or court, or by being hit by a piece of equipment such as a bat or ball
- A “whiplash” effect after a blow to the body that results in a violent shaking of the head from front to back, side to side, or even a rotational force such as a soccer header or a facemask being grabbed and the neck being forcefully twisted

#### A Concussion:

- Can happen during practice or competition in *ANY* sport
- Can happen even if you do not lose consciousness
- Can change the way your brain normally works
- Presents itself differently in every athlete
- Can range from mild to severe but are equally as serious

### HOW CAN I PREVENT A CONCUSSION?

**Basic steps you can take to protect yourself from a concussion:**

- Do not initiate contact with your head or helmet. You can still get a concussion if you are wearing a helmet.
- Avoid striking an opponent in the head. Undercutting, flying elbows, stepping on the head, hitting an unprotected opponent, and objects to the head all cause concussions.
- Practice good sportsmanship at all times
- Follow the rules of the sport
- Practice and perfect the skills of the sport

### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?

You can't “see” a concussion, but you might notice some of the symptoms right away. Other symptoms can show up hours or days after the injury and can sometimes last for weeks, months, or even longer in some cases. Concussions occur most frequently in football, but men's/women's soccer, men's/women's basketball, volleyball, and wrestling follow closely behind. All student-athletes are at risk. Concussion signs and symptoms include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ✓ *Amnesia or Confusion*
- ✓ *Headache*
- ✓ *Nausea (feeling that you might vomit)*
- ✓ *Double or fuzzy vision*
- ✓ *Loss of consciousness*
- ✓ *Balance problems or dizziness*
- ✓ *Sensitivity to light or noise*
- ✓ *Feeling sluggish, foggy, or groggy*
- ✓ *Feeling unusually irritable*
- ✓ *Slowed reaction time*
- ✓ *Concentration or memory problems*
- ✓ *Sleeping too little and/or too much*

Concussion may cause one or multiple symptoms that can interfere with school, work, and social life. Exercise or activities that involve a lot of concentration such as studying, working on the computer or mobile device, or video games may cause concussion symptoms (such as headaches or tiredness) to reappear or get worse.

***IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON. WHEN IN DOUBT, GET CHECKED OUT.***



### WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

- ✓ **Don't hide it.** Tell your athletic trainer and/or coach. Never ignore a blow to the head. What you think of as just having your “bell rung” or being “dinged” is still serious. Also, tell your athletic trainer and/or coach if one of your teammates might have a concussion. Sports have injury timeouts and player substitutions so that you can be examined by an appropriate health care professional.
- ✓ **Report it.** Do not return to participation in a game, practice or other activity with symptoms. The sooner you get examined, the sooner you may be able to return to play safely.
- ✓ **Get checked out.** With the team work of your certified athletic trainer and a physician who is trained in concussion management they can tell you if you have had a concussion and when it is safe for you to return to play. A concussion can affect your ability to perform everyday activities, your reaction time, balance, classroom performance, and sleep patterns.
- ✓ **Take time to recover.** If you have had a concussion, your brain needs time to heal. While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have a repeat concussion. In some cases, repeat concussions can cause permanent brain damage, and even death. Severe brain injury can change your whole quality of life.