

# A Fact Sheet for HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES

## HEADS UP CONCUSSION

### WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that affects how your brain works. It can happen when your brain gets bounced around in your skull after a fall or hit to the head.

This sheet has information to help you protect yourself from concussion or other serious brain injury and know what to do if a concussion occurs.

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



**REPORT IT.** Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. It's up to you to report your symptoms. Your coach and team are relying on you. Plus, you won't play your best if you are not feeling well.

**GET CHECKED OUT.** If you think you have a concussion, do not return to play on the day of the injury. Only a health care provider can tell if you have a concussion and when it is OK to return to school and play. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play.



**GIVE YOUR BRAIN TIME TO HEAL.** A concussion can make everyday activities, such as going to school, harder. You may need extra help getting back to your normal activities. Be sure to update your parents and doctor about how you are feeling.

### WHY SHOULD I TELL MY COACH AND PARENT ABOUT MY SYMPTOMS?



- Playing or practicing with a concussion is dangerous and can lead to a longer recovery.
- While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. This can put you at risk for a more serious injury to your brain and can even be fatal.



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**GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW:**  
IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON.

## HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

You may have a concussion if you have any of these symptoms after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body:

-  ..... **Get a headache**
-  ..... **Feel dizzy, sluggish or foggy**
-  ..... **Be bothered by light or noise**
-  ..... **Have double or blurry vision**
-  ..... **Vomit or feel sick to your stomach**
-  ..... **Have trouble focusing or problems remembering**
-  ..... **Feel more emotional or "down"**
-  ..... **Feel confused**
-  ..... **Have problems with sleep**

Concussion symptoms usually show up right away, but you might not notice that something "isn't right" for hours or days. A concussion feels different to each person, so it is important to tell your parents and doctor how you are feeling.

*The information provided in this document or through linkages to other sites is not a substitute for medical or professional care. Questions about diagnosis and treatment for concussion should be directed to a physician or other health care provider.*



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To learn more, go to [www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP](http://www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP)

## HOW CAN I HELP MY TEAM?



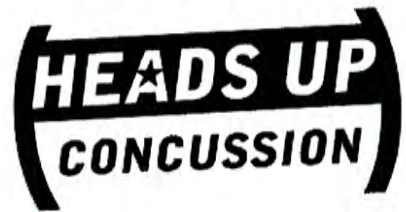
### PROTECT YOUR BRAIN.

Avoid hits to the head and follow the rules for safe and fair play to lower your chances of getting a concussion. Ask your coaches for more tips.



**BE A TEAM PLAYER.** You play an important role as part of a team. Encourage your teammates to report their symptoms and help them feel comfortable taking the time they need to get better.

# A Fact Sheet for HIGH SCHOOL PARENTS



This sheet has information to help protect your teens from concussion or other serious brain injury.

## 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 My Teens Safe?

Sports are a great way for teens to stay healthy and can help them do well in school. To help lower your teens' 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.
  - › 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 teens that you expect them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- When appropriate for the sport or activity, teach your teens that they must wear a helmet to lower the chances of the most serious types of brain or head injury. There is no "concussion-proof" helmet. Even with a helmet, it is important for teens to avoid hits to the head.

## How Can I Spot a Possible Concussion?

Teens who show or report one or more of the signs and symptoms listed below—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.

### Signs Observed by Parents

- 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 Teens

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

**Talk with your teens about concussion.** Tell them to report their concussion symptoms to you and their coach right away. Some teens 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.*



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### GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW:

IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON.

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



### Plan ahead.

What do you want your teen to know about concussion?

## 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 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.



You can also download the CDC **HEADS UP** app to get concussion information at your fingertips. Just scan the QR code pictured at left with your smartphone.

## What Should I Do If My Teen Has a Possible Concussion?

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

1. Remove your teen from play.
2. Keep your teen out of play the day of the injury. Your 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 teen's health care provider for written instructions on helping your teen return to school. You can give the instructions to your teen's school nurse and teacher(s) and return-to-play instructions to the coach and/or athletic trainer.

Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Only a health care provider should assess a teen for a possible concussion. You may not know how serious the concussion is at first, and some symptoms may not show up for hours or days. A teen's return to school and sports should be a gradual process that is carefully managed and monitored by a health care provider.

➤ **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 teen for a lifetime. It can even be fatal.**

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