



CONCUSSION: DO'S AND DON'TS



A concussion is caused by a blow or a jolt to the head that results in a change in brain function. This can include symptoms of headache, dizziness, and confusion or disorientation. Symptoms of a concussion may last less than a day but it is not uncommon for children to have symptoms longer. Most of the time, however, there are no lasting effects from a concussion, especially when it is correctly treated. For proper prevention and treatment of concussion, follow these important do's and don'ts.

concussion do's and don'ts



DO Protect a Young Brain

The brain of a young person is still in development and needs to be protected from injury. Children and teens should always wear a helmet while playing contact sports like football, hockey and lacrosse, as well as during activities like horse riding, biking, skateboarding or snowboarding. Helmets should fit appropriately and be in good condition. In sports, athletes should be taught safe playing techniques, equipment maintenance and to follow the rules of the game.

DON'T Miss the Signs

A concussion isn't always obvious. Watch for these signs in your child or teen, especially while they are participating in contact sports. Symptoms may take up to a day to appear after an incident.

- Headache
- Balance problems
- Visual problems
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Dazed or stunned
- Sadness
- Nervousness
- Feeling mentally "foggy"
- Confused about recent events
- Sleeping less or more than usual
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Forgetful of recent information or conversations
- Answers questions slowly or repeats questions
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness
- Fatigue or drowsiness
- Numbness or tingling
- Irritability
- More emotional
- Trouble falling asleep
- Feeling slowed down

Seek emergency care immediately if your child or teen has experienced unconsciousness for any amount of time or has changes in alertness, convulsions or seizures, muscle weakness, persistent confusion, repeated vomiting, unequal pupils, unusual eye movements or walking problems.

DO Sit on the Sidelines

The most important thing to do if your child or teen is injured during a sports activity is to immediately STOP playing. They need to avoid any further hits, jolts, shakes or bumps to the head or spine. Getting back in the game is not worth the risk. The signs of concussion aren't always clear, so when in doubt, sit it out.

Athletes may not want to tell their coach if they had a concussion. Encourage them to come forward if they have an injury, or if they notice a teammate is injured. Young athletes should never ignore a head injury or impact to the head.

DON'T Skip Treatment

Even a mild concussion should be evaluated by a doctor. Get in to see your child's pediatrician or primary care doctor as soon as possible. When concussion is severe or symptoms won't go away, talk to your doctor about a referral to the CHOC Children's Concussion Program, which offers pediatric sports medicine specialists, neurologists, neurosurgeons, neuropsychologists and rehabilitation therapists who are all trained in concussion management.

DON'T Rush Recovery

More than 85 percent of concussions heal fine if managed well in the first days to weeks following the injury. Rest is important immediately following a concussion. For 24-48 hours, your child should stay home from school and get plenty of quiet time and mental rest. This includes limiting activities like:

- Television
- Reading
- Social interaction
- Texting
- Driving
- Attending loud events
- Social media
- Doing homework

Return to Learn: Most children should be able to tolerate some school after a few days. If they miss more school than that, it will be important to contact the school and your doctor to help intervene.

Return to Play: When it comes to returning to sports, symptoms must be resolved first. Be sure to get medical clearance from your child's doctor before they get back in the game.

DO Prevent Future Injury

One concussion is rough enough, but additional injury is even worse. Research has shown that repeated jars to the head can have long-lasting effects on the brain. And, if a child or teen suffers a second concussion before the first concussion heals, they are at risk for Second Impact Syndrome, a life-threatening condition. Parents, coaches and athletes should be extra cautious to prevent future concussions.